

*Chapter 6*  
*Christian Era*

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# CHRISTIAN ERA

### CHRISTIAN CONCEPT OF GOD

The Tangkhul Naga in the present generation being a Christian community now believes in the God which the Christians believe and for Christians in general and specially the Baptist denominations, God is understood in the form of Trinity, a combination of three yet as one, and they are: God the Father, God the Son, and Holy Spirit. In this trinity revolves around the faith of the Christians and especially the Baptists who are a strong believer in it, infact their believe system revolves around this three God as one. Since this concept is being accepted and believe by all the Christians, the people of Tangkhul are not exceptional to this. The people were taught to believe in this and were convinced that it is this God who can deliver them from sins and give them an eternal life in heaven. So, are the people of a small village like Itham who are now the believers in the Christian faith and to the extend that they have a rule in the village that no other religion or other Christian denominations will be allowed to settle permanently in the village.

To the people of Tangkhul, the Christian Bible speaks of God in personal terms —as one who is, who speaks, who sees, hears, acts and loves. God is understood to have a will and personality and is an all powerful, divine and benevolent being. He is represented in Scripture as being primarily concerned with people and their salvation.

In Christian religion and now for the people of Tangkhul, another definition of God is the eternal being that created and preserves the universe. God is believed by most Christians as with and within all things, the peoplebelieves in the plan of redemption as shown in the scriptures where god is immamnent:

1. 1 Corinthians 15:28: And when all things shall subdued unto him, then shall the son also himself be subject unto him that all things under him, that God may be all in all

2. Colossians 1:19-20, For it pleased the Father that in him should all fullness dwell; and having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven and
3. Ephesians 1:10 That in the dispensation of the fullness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him (Bible)

It explains that God is one and all in all. Most Christians faith, believe he is also transcendent based on the New Testament only though God the Son, a Jewish God-man called Jesus, was on earth during his Ministry and will return to earth in the Second Coming of Christ, to fulfil his commitments as the Christian Messiah and it is this Second Coming of the Jesus that the people awaits by doing good things, trying to be holy, pure and acceptable before Jesus when he shall return, and the promise of Heaven the people awaits. It is clearly written in the Bible that when he returns he will take away the believers and they shall inherit the Kingdom

For Christians, God is usually held to have the properties of holiness (separate from sin and incorruptible), justice (fair, right, and true in all his judgement), Omnipotence (all powerful), Omniscience (all-knowing), Omni-benevolence (all-loving), omnipresence (everywhere present) and immortality (eternal and everlasting).

Therefore for all believers in God of Christians the Trinitarian doctrine is considered to be a core tenet of their faith where God exist as the Father, the creator of heaven and earth, the Son who came to dwell in this world as human and sanctify the sinners with his blood and the Holy Spirit who guides the people (<http://www.gotothebible.com>).

#### **A. “Father, Son and Holy Spirit”**

“Father, Son, and Holy Spirit” is a quotation of Jesus's words as recorded in the Great Commission: “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.(Matthew 28:19) The names, in similar order, later appeared in the Apostle Paul’s apostolic benediction : “The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.” (2 Corinthian 13:14) Since the inception of Christianity, the Christians

have called upon God with the name “Father, Son and Holy Spirit” in prayer (<http://www.christinyou.net>).

Therefore the Christian doctrine basically believes in God the Father, the Son (incarnate as Jesus of Nazareth) and the Holy Spirit (or Holy Ghost). Since earliest Christianity, one's salvation has been very closely related to the concept of a triune God. Most Christians believe that God is spirit, an un-created, omnipotent, and eternal being, the creator and sustainer of all things, who works the redemption of the world through his Son, Jesus Christ. With this background, belief in the divinity of Christ and the Holy Spirit is expressed as the doctrine of the Holy Trinity, which describes the single Divine substance existing as three distinct and inseparable persons (1 John 5:7).

### **B. God as Father**

In Christianity, God is called “Father” in a more literal sense, besides being the creator and nurturer of creation, and the provider for his children. The Father is said to have an eternal relation to his only begotten son, Jesus Christ, which implies an exclusive and intimate familiarity: “No one knows the Father except the Son and any one to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.”(Mathew 11:27) In Christian theology, this is the revelation of a sense in which fatherhood is inherent to God's nature, an eternal relationship. In the New Testament, God is called “Father” 245 times.

To Christians, God the Father's relationship with humanity is as a father to children. Thus, humans in general are sometimes called *children of God*. To Christians, God the Father's relationship with humanity is that of Creator and created beings, and in that respect he is the father of all. The New Testament says, in this sense, that the very idea of family, wherever it appears, derives its name from God the Father.

In Bible, the book of Mark records that Jesus used the term Abba when praying to God the Father during his Agony in the garden of Gethsemane shortly before his crucifixion, saying: “Abba, Father, all things are possible to you; remove this cup from me. Yet not what I want, but what you want.” (Mark 14:36) Here is the fervent appeal of a son to a beloved father, followed quickly by an assurance that, in any event, he would remain obedient.

**C. God as Son**

In the mainstream interpretation of the Bible, the second Person of the Trinity, because of his eternal relation to the first Person (God as Father), is the Son of God. He is considered coequal with the Father and Holy Spirit. He is all God and all Human, the son of God as to his divine nature, while as to his human nature he is from the lineage of David. (Romans 1: 3, 4) His mission on earth proved to be that of enabling people to know God as their Father, which Christians believe is the essence of eternal life.

**D. God as Holy Spirit**

The Holy Spirit is one of the three divine persons of the Trinity who make up the single substance of God; that is, the Spirit is considered to act in concert with and share an essential nature with God the Father and God the Son (Jesus).

It is in this context and the believe that the Christians live with, and their faith lies in these triune body.

Thus the basic concept of God in the Christian life is the believe in the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, they believe that it was the Father who created heaven and earth and all everything that is in it. It is seen in the Bible in the very first book of the Old Testament called Genesis.

The Bible text that deals about the creation of the earth and heaven are written and which the Christians and the people o Tangkhul believes can be found in the Bible in the following way in the book of Genesis Chapter 1 and Chapter 2:

- 1:1 In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.
- 1:2 And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters.
- 1:3 And God said, Let there be light: and there was light.
- 1:4 And God saw the light, that it was good: and God divided the light from the darkness.
- 1:5 And God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And the evening and the morning were the first day.

- 1:6 And God said, Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters, and let it divide the waters from the waters.
- 1:7 And God made the firmament, and divided the waters which were under the firmament from the waters which were above the firmament: and it was so.
- 1:8 And God called the firmament Heaven. And the evening and the morning were the second day.
- 1:9 And God said, Let the waters under the heaven be gathered together unto one place, and let the dry land appear: and it was so.
- 1:10 And God called the dry land Earth; and the gathering together of the waters called he Seas: and God saw that it was good.
- 1:11 And God said, Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb yielding seed, and the fruit tree yielding fruit after his kind, whose seed is in itself, upon the earth: and it was so.
- 1:12 And the earth brought forth grass, and herb yielding seed after his kind, and the tree yielding fruit, whose seed was in itself, after his kind: and God saw that it was good.
- 1:13 And the evening and the morning were the third day.
- 1:14 And God said, Let there be lights in the firmament of the heaven to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs, and for seasons, and for days, and years:
- 1:15 And let them be for lights in the firmament of the heaven to give light upon the earth: and it was so.
- 1:16 And God made two great lights; the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night: he made the stars also.
- 1:17 And God set them in the firmament of the heaven to give light upon the earth,
- 1:18 And to rule over the day and over the night, and to divide the light from the darkness: and God saw that it was good.
- 1:19 And the evening and the morning were the fourth day.
- 1:20 And God said, Let the waters bring forth abundantly the moving creature that hath life, and fowl that may fly above the earth in the open firmament of heaven.
- 1:21 And God created great whales, and every living creature that moveth, which the waters brought forth abundantly, after their kind, and every winged fowl after his kind: and God saw that it was good.
- 1:22 And God blessed them, saying, Be fruitful, and multiply, and fill the waters in the seas, and let fowl multiply in the earth.
- 1:23 And the evening and the morning were the fifth day.

- 1:24 And God said, Let the earth bring forth the living creature after his kind, cattle, and creeping thing, and beast of the earth after his kind: and it was so.
- 1:25 And God made the beast of the earth after his kind, and cattle after their kind, and everything that creepeth upon the earth after his kind: and God saw that it was good.
- 1:26 And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth.
- 1:27 So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them.
- 1:28 And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth.
- 1:29 And God said, Behold, I have given you every herb bearing seed, which is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree, in the which is the fruit of a tree yielding seed; to you it shall be for meat.
- 1:30 And to every beast of the earth, and to every fowl of the air, and to everything that creepeth upon the earth, wherein there is life, I have given every green herb for meat: and it was so.
- 1:31 And God saw everything that he had made, and, behold, it was very good. And the evening and the morning were the sixth day.

## Chapter 2

- 2:1 Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them.
- 2:2 And on the seventh day God ended his work which he had made; and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had made.
- 2:3 And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it: because that in it he had rested from all his work which God created and made.
- 2:4 These are the generations of the heavens and of the earth when they were created, in the day that the Lord God made the earth and the heavens,

Then the world flourish and the Christians believe that with the passage of time, the people drifted away from God and God sent his only son Jesus Christ to rescue the mankind from sins by shedding his blood on the cross and thus the people were saved again through him this can be found in one verse of the Bible from the book of John

chapter 3 verse 16: “For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life”. (John 3:16)

It is written that God sent his son so that whoever believed in him will have eternal life, it was prophesied from the very beginning that the son of God, the Jesus Christ will be crucified and he shall rise again from the dead on the third day, this rising from the dead is a significance that He has triumph over the death. This was predicted and even Jesus himself know this, so he told his disciples about his dead and rising again in the Bible (Mathew 20:18-19)

Behold, we go up to Jerusalem; and the Son of man shall be betrayed unto the chief priests and unto the scribes, and they shall condemn him to death, And shall deliver him to the Gentiles to mock, and to scourge, and to crucify him: and the third day he shall rise again (Mathew 20: 17-19).

On the third day after he rose again from the dead and while he was leaving for heaven the disciples were undecided and confused so he told them that he will come back again to this earth and until then they should spread the word of God, they should preach and tell the world about God and this can be found in the following words in the book of Matthew:

“And Jesus came and spoke unto them, saying, all power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world” (Matthew 28: 18-20).

It is this promise of his coming back also being with the people in the form of spirit is something that the people of Tangkhul as other Christians hold on to. The Christians belief that in the present era it is the spirit of God which is with the people, with the believers and this can be seen from the Bible when Jesus was leaving this world he breath this spirit unto his disciples and promise that he is with them, and this can be seen from the book of John

And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost (John 20:22) then he ascended in the cloud to Heaven and saying that he is going to heaven to prepare a place for believers and will come back again to take all the believers to heaven and this can be seen in the Bible in the book of John in the following words:

“In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also” (John 14:2-3).

It is in this hope of the second coming of Jesus that the people of Tangkhul have embraced leaving behind their ancestor's religion and Christianity has become so deep rooted in this society and some years from now, when the few people of the older generation who have not been converted die out, cent percent of the Tangkhul will be Christians. It is remarkable to note that among the Tangkhul, Christianity has changed its colour in conformity with the traditional culture and this can be called as indigenization of religion. Christian revivalism is there, which is charged with emotion and their faith and believes conform now only to the Christian faiths and believes. The people now belief in the triune God- the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit which is the believe of every Christians of this world.

### **THE HOLY BOOK**

The state of Tangkhul as described by the first missionary William Pettigrew in his report can be seen in the following lines:

“An old piece of paper was grabbed and looks upon as a curiosity. The majority of the people have never left their mountain in fastnesses, even to visit another tribe or the people of the valley. They were completely ignorant of the outside world. The villagers were independent and democratic. Clannishness, the fear of evil spirits, a blind belief in the efficacy of monthly and annual feasts, ignorance, gross superstition, sin- all these held people in thrall” (Solo 2010:83).

As mentioned before, they had no written script and no one, not a single person was literate but with the coming of Christianity and the script. Whereas the people are now

literate and Bible is now one book which is read the most by the people of Tangkhul in the present generation. They are taught to read Bible in the morning, in the night, in the afternoon, whenever they are free and as often as they can. Every family has Bible in their home and almost every learned man has their own Bible, they keep them in their room, under their pillow and whenever they travel they carry it along with them. Bible is now translated in their own dialect. They are found in various sizes from large to small pocket size. Many people read this Tangkhul translated Bible and those who are well learned or those who had atleast gone to school, those who understand English also keep English Bible in their house.

The importance of Bible is seen when you ask any family or any individual if they have a copy of Bible or if they read Bible. Therefore Bible is the main book for the Tangkhul. The pastor of the Itham Baptist Church has six copies of Bible out of which two were Tangkhul and four English Bible. Out of the two Tangkhul Bible, one contains both Old Testament and New Testament and one was only New Testament and out of the four English Bible, two were the Bible which includes both the Old Testament and New Testament, the other compiled of New Testament only and one was with footnotes explaining in detail about almost every words of the Bible.

On asking about the Bible the pastor a said it is a holy book that contains almost everything you can imagine such as warning, comfort, war, heaven, about evil, parables. The Bible is now so important that they “read Bible in both sad and good times”. Bible for the people of Tangkhul who have converted to Christianity is the account of God's action in the world and his purpose with all creation.

The Bible has mainly two section called:

1. Old Testament
2. New Testament

The Bible is written by forty authors written way back in six centuries. Both the Old Testament and the New Testament contains sixty-six books containing the message God wants to convey to the human race. It is written in the Holy Bible that God created the whole Universe including human. This compilation of booklets contains an

astonishing variety of literary styles. It provides many stories about the lives of good and bad people, about battles and journeys, about the life of Jesus along with letters written to groups of Christians that met in homes. It comes in the form of narratives and dialogues, in proverbs and parables, in songs and allegories, in history and prophecy.

So along with the diversity there is also a remarkable unity so the Bible for the believer is:

1. It is a guide for living life to the full. It gives a road map for the perilous journey of life. Or to put it another way, on our voyage through life's ocean, we find our anchor right here.
2. It is a storehouse of wonderful stories for children and grownups. Such as Noah and the ark, Joseph's coat of many colours, Daniel in the lion's den, Jonah and the fish, the parables of Jesus, etc. In these stories we recognize the triumphs and failures of ordinary people.
3. It is a refuge in trouble. People in pain, in suffering, in prison, in mourning, tell how they turned to the Bible and found strength there in their desperate hours.
4. It is a treasury of insights as to who we are. We are not meaningless robots, but we are magnificent creatures of a God who loves us and gives us a purpose, a destiny and importantly a power of choice.
5. It is a sourcebook for everyday living. We find standards for our conduct, guidelines for knowing right from wrong, and principles to help us in a confused society where so often many things go wrong (<http://www.christiananswers.net>).

The Old Testament consisted of 39 books and the second portion which is called the New Testament, contains a set of 27 books so the Christian Bible contains 66 “Books” in total. The Books are divided into Chapters. The Chapters are further divided into Verses. For instance, if you want to locate John 3:16, you would have to open the Bible to the Book of John, after which turn to Chapter 3, and then look for Verse 16:

“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life” (John 3:16).

The Old Testament has 39 books:

1. Genesis (50 chapters).
2. Exodus (40 chapters).
3. Leviticus (27 chapters).
4. Numbers (36 chapters).
5. Deuteronomy (34 chapters).
6. Joshua (24 chapters).
7. Judges (21 chapters).
8. Ruth (4 chapters).
9. 1 Samuel (31 chapters).
10. 2 Samuel (24 chapters).
11. 1 Kings (22 chapters).
12. 2 Kings (25 chapters).
13. 1 Chronicles (29 chapters).
14. 2 Chronicles (36 chapters).
15. Ezra (10 chapters).
16. Nehemiah (13 chapters).
17. Esther (10 chapters).
18. Job (42 chapters).
19. Psalms (150 chapters).
20. Proverbs (31 chapters).
21. Ecclesiastes (12 chapters).
22. Song of Solomon (8 chapters).
23. Isaiah (66 chapters).
24. Jeremiah (52 chapters).
25. Lamentations (5 chapters).
26. Ezekiel (48 chapters).
27. Daniel (12 chapters).
28. Hosea (14 chapters).
29. Joel (3 chapters).
30. Amos (9 chapters).
31. Obadiah (1 chapters).
32. Jonah (4 chapters).
33. Micah (7 chapters).
34. Nahum (3 chapters).
35. Habakkuk (3 chapters).
36. Zephaniah (3 chapters).
37. Haggai (2 chapters).
38. Zechariah (14 chapters).
39. Malachi (4 chapters).

The New Testament has 27 books:

1. Matthew (28 chapters).
2. Mark (16 chapters).
3. Luke (24 chapters).
4. John (21 chapters).
5. Acts (28 chapters).
6. Romans (16 chapters).
7. 1 Corinthians (16 chapters).
8. 2 Corinthians (13 chapters).
9. Galatians (6 chapters).
10. Ephesians (6 chapters).
11. Philippians (4 chapters).
12. Colossians (4 chapters).
13. 1 Thessalonians (5 chapters).
14. 2 Thessalonians (3 chapters).

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| 15. 1 Timothy (6 chapters). | 22. 2 Peter (3 chapters).             |
| 16. 2 Timothy (4 chapters). | 23. 1 John (5 chapters).              |
| 17. Titus (3 chapters).     | 24. 2 John (1 chapters).              |
| 18. Philemon (1 chapters).  | 25. 3 John (1 chapters).              |
| 19. Hebrews (13 chapters).  | 26. Jude (1 chapters).                |
| 20. James (5 chapters).     | 27. Revelation (22 chapters). (Bible) |
| 21. 1 Peter (5 chapters).   |                                       |

### **A. The Old Testament**

Books 1-5: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy. These books were written perhaps as long ago as 3400 years ago, by Moses.

Books 6-16: Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1 Samuel, 2 Samuel, 1 Kings, 2 Kings, 1 Chronicles, 2 Chronicles, Ezra and Nehemiah. These books explain the history of Israel from the time that the nation was established about 3400 years ago. It includes information about the time when the nation was conquered by the Assyrians about 2700 years ago, and when it was conquered by the Babylonians about 2600 years ago. The Assyrians and Babylonians forced many Jews out of their homeland. But, many Jews returned during the next few centuries, shortly before the time of Jesus.

Books 17-22: Ester, Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes and Song of Solomon. These books are sometimes called the books of Writings, or the books of Poetry, or the books of Wisdom.

Books 23-27: Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel and Daniel. These books contain prophecies that were delivered by prophets named Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Daniel. These prophets lived about 2700 to 2500 years ago. Some of their prophecies found fulfilment more than 2500 years ago. Christians believe that many of the prophecies were fulfilled by Jesus about 2000 years ago. And many of their prophecies have found fulfilment during the past 200 years.

Books 28-39: Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi. These books are sometimes called the books of the “minor” prophets. They are called “minor” because their books are short in length.

**B. The New Testament**

Books 1-4: Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. These four books are sometimes called the Gospel, or the Gospels. They were written about 2000 years ago by the followers of Jesus. These books contain details about the life and teachings of Jesus Christ.

Books 5-26: Acts, Romans, 1 Corinthians, 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 Thessalonians, 2 Thessalonians, 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon, Hebrews, James, 1 Peter, 2 Peter, 1 John, 2 John, 3 John and Jude. These 22 books are sometimes called Letters or Epistles. They were written by followers of Jesus. They often were sent to other people to help explain Christianity. Sometimes they were written to counter heresy, or wrongful interpretations of the teachings of Jesus.

Book 27: Revelation. This book was written by John about 1900 years ago. He was shown visions of the future by Jesus. This book contains many prophecies about the End Times, or the Apocalypse. (<http://www.gbcbf.org>)

Basically, the Bible describes the origin of man in the Garden of Eden along with his fall into sin and out of fellowship with God. It then describes how God called out a special people to Himself, the Israelites. He promised the Israelites a future Messiah who would restore mankind's relationship with God. The Bible is the account of the work of God in history bringing to fruition His prophetic declarations concerning Jesus. Jesus was born of the Virgin, died on the cross, and paid the price for sins, just as the Bible prophesied in the Old Testament and fulfilled in the New Testament.

Even among the people of Tangkhul if one argue about Bible being just a book of fairy tale you will find that people recollecting about the proof , the contains of great wisdom and truth saying that it has been verified throughout history as being accurate. Its historical accounts are flawlessly accurate. The people are taught and narrated about archaeologist routinely demonstrating the accuracy of the biblical records concerning locations and events recorded in the Bible. Thus, if one walks through the mountains of the Tangkhul people we now see and hear the importance of the Bible through Christianity.

## THE LORD'S PRAYER

After conversion to Christianity, the Tangkhul's were taught right from the beginning about prayer, the way of Christians pray, the new life of Christianity, and thus everything about Christianity was imparted and the old way of life were encouraged to discard. One important thing they learnt was this Lord's prayer, like the priest who chanted the mantra, those days the Lord's prayer was asked to be memorised, was taught to say in almost all the Christian gatherings and thus it became a doxology and everyone memorise it irrespective of the young and old, and which still pertains to the present context where you will find that almost everyone who are literate knows it in English and those old aged people still remember them in Tangkhul dialect as it was translated into Tangkhul dialect by the first missionary himself.

The English version of the Lord's Prayer is common for all Christian and the prayer as it occurs in Matthew 6:9-13 goes like this:

Our Father, which art in heaven,  
hallowed be thy name;  
thy kingdom come;  
thy will be done,  
in earth as it is in heaven.  
Give us this day our daily bread.  
And forgive us our trespasses,  
as we forgive them that trespass against us.  
And lead us not into temptation;  
but deliver us from evil.  
For thine is the kingdom,  
the power, and the glory,  
for ever and ever.  
Amen.

This very prayer was translated into Tangkhul dialect by carefully looking into each words, each meaning by the founders of the script considering that it will be used for generations to come, it was a common phenomenon to memorise this in the yore when the people first embraced Christianity, now the younger generation does memorise but

the common thing is in the English version yet it should not be forgotten that this Tangkhul dialect version is also taught to every individual who went to school, back in the district, in the home town as it is included in the syllabi of the of every school. This particular prayer is included in the standard one of the school. The prayer in the Tangkhul dialect is thus translated as follows:

Kazingramli khalei ithum saikorawui he! Ava Amei  
 Ishamei wui mingli ngarongrida phaning ranu  
 Ishamei wui ngalei shokmilu  
 Ishameina kazingli kaphaning thada mikumo  
 Okathuilila chithada phaning ranu,  
 Ithumwui zakhavai kashak kaza aja ithum saikorali kha milu  
 Mina ithumli khayon khamang salala ithumna ya  
 Ji-kahai chithada Ishamei nala ithumwui  
 Khayon khamangchi ya kaji-milu.  
 Ithum saikorali makapha kasui chilli mazang ngasakmialu  
 Kha makapa masa khavai kahuimilu.  
 Khikhala jila okathuili, yuishapa sashapa chila  
 Kala tekhamatei chila mashimanda Ishameiwui sera  
 Amen (Shimray 2001: 23).

As far as prayer is concerned the people are taught to pray almost everywhere and as often as they can, the people in general pray atleast 4-5 times a day. They usually pray as soon as they wake up before stepping down from the bed and before every meal and lastly before going to sleep. Students are ask to pray in the school in the chapel, those who went to paddy field they pray in the field, they also pray for any occasion, so the number of prayer ranges from 4-5 in normal life. They also pray in times of joy and sorrow, in times of thanks giving and also in times of praising and worshiping their God.

## TEN COMMANDMENTS

With the coming of Christianity and the change in the life style of the people it is important to ask as to what is the most important thing now in their life, the value of life and as expected it is the God they worship and it is for this reason that they seems to be very willing in helping others, in loving others and trying to be true, and if it is the

religion that is so important than what is it in the religion that people cling to, in most of the cases it has been that Bible that people lean on to when they face any uncertain situations such as dead, or accident or any natural calamities.

On the further queries as if there is anything which is the most important part of the Bible or is there anything which is very crucial or peculiar about Bible then it is definitely found in the two Bible verses which according to most Christians among the Tangkhul is the most crucial and important. One is from the Old Testament and another one from the New Testament.

The one in the Old Testament is the one God himself has given to Moses called the Ten Commandment which is found in the book of Exodus:

And the LORD said unto Moses, Come up to me into the mount, and be there: and I will give thee tables of stone, and a law, and commandments which I have written; that thou may teach them. And Moses rose up, and his minister Joshua and Moses went up into the mount of God. And God spoke all these words, saying: "I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.

1. You shall have no other gods before me.
2. You shall not make for yourself any carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth; you shall not bow down to them nor serve them. For I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and fourth generations of those who hate me, but showing mercy to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments.
3. You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain, for the Lord will not hold him guiltless who takes His name in vain.
4. Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord your God. In it you shall do no work: you, nor your son, nor your daughter, nor your manservant, nor your maidservant, nor your cattle, nor your stranger who is within your gates. For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it.

5. Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long upon the land which the Lord your God is giving you.
6. You shall not murder.
7. You shall not commit adultery.
8. You shall not steal.
9. You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.
10. You shall not covet your neighbour's house; you shall not covet your neighbour's wife, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his ox, nor his donkey, nor anything that is your neighbour's." (Exodus 20:1-17) (Bible)

This verses taught the people with Do's and Don't's of a Christian life and they hold on to these instructions and tries to follow these commandments. These verses are the most important for any Christian life to live a true holy and pure life.

The second one is from the New Testament from the book of John, that tell the love of God for his people, for the creation he had created and thus sacrifice his only son to save his people to let the people have eternal life and it is this eternal life that the Tangkhul Christians long for and waits for this life. And the Bible verse says:

"For God so love the world that He gave his only begotten son, that whosoever believe in Him shall not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16).

The people of Tangkhul might have forgotten to memorise the Ten Commandments of the Old Testament but ask any person to read John 3:16 and they shall read it without any break in between. The children are taught in the Sunday school so it has become a habit and mandatory to memorise verse for all Christian of the Tangkhul community. The student mostly in the village level would rather remember it in Tangkhul dialect from the Bible translated in Tangkhul dialect.

It was translated into Tangkhul dialect as:

"Khikhala chila Vare na okathuili leishina kahai wuivang awui naoho chi miya, mi chilli shitakasang kachiva mathila katang makhavai kharing samphangra" (John 3:16).

The people are taught that this verse is the most powerful one that they can read in any circumstances of uncertainty, when they are sad, when they are scared, when they are sick and this verse will give them solace and peace at heart and thus this became one of the most popular verse that that Tangkhul Christians ever believed.

## **HYMNS**

The Tangkhul people are very fond of music since time immemorial, they were very fond of singing, in the contemporary, every nook and corner of the Tangkhul hill, you will find people playing guitar and singing, almost all the Tangkhul know how to play guitar. The guitar they are playing now is a western music instrument, before the coming of British they had no knowledge of guitar but the people those days were also fond of singing and dancing, they used to sing folk song and had folk dance. Their musical instruments consist of *Sipu* (blow-horn) made of the horns of animals and *Talu* made of bamboo which they play by blowing into it and there is a *Pung* (Drum) made of animal skin and *Tingteila* (guitar) made of cane.

The people of Tangkhul after converting to Christianity are now very fond of singing hymns in the Church and any other Christian gatherings. The English hymnal was translated into Tangkhul and the people are now singing in their own dialect. The tunes and meaning are the same with the English Hymnal but the words are translated and modified somehow to suit the Tangkhul vocabulary. There has been many song books of the Tangkhul people since the first conversion into Christianity and the coming of letter. The people then realised the need to have a uniform hymns for all the Baptist Churches in the Tangkhul hills so in the year of 1969 the first Christian hymns were translated and decided to distribute in all the Churches in the Tangkhul Naga Baptist Council (TNBC) Executive meeting held in Hungdung village from December 3 to 8, 1969) and thus committee was appointed to translate the Christian Western Hymns and compiled it to use in all the Baptist Churches of Tangkhul Naga. Since then there has been many revised prints and the number of copies keep on increasing with the demand rising in every revised prints and the Committee then decided to call the hymn book as

*Khokharum Laa* (worship Song). The latest revised print was in the year 2008 where they printed five thousand copies.

The *Khokharum laa* consist of 575 songs in total which is divided into different sections such as Adoration, Assurance, Atonement, Baptism, Bible, Christian endeavour, Christmas, Church, Comfort, Confession, Repentance, Confident, Trust, Conflict, Consecration, Cross, Death and Resurrection, Dedication, Easter, Evening hymn, Faith, Farewell, Fellowship, Funeral, God, Good Friday, Gospel Message, Grace, Guidance, Harvest time, Heaven, Holiness, Holy spirit, Invitation, Jesus / saviour, Joy, Love, Lord's super, Love, Marching hymns, Mission, New year, Thanks giving, Palm Sunday, Praise, Processional, Protection, Response, Salvation, Second Coming, Security, Service, Stewardship, Temptation, Victory, Warning, Wedding and Worship.

Each section contains many songs and they are sung according to the occasion and there are songs for every occasion. It is this *khokharum laa* that people of the Tangkhul sang in the church and in every Christian gathering.

## **CHRISTIAN ORGANISATION**

The Church we see today is not one body rather just a part of the larger body. During my research it was astonishing to learn that this small Church at the village is related to such a chain of body at the international level. The highest body at the international level is Baptist World Alliance which is related to the national level to the regional body to the State level and Tribal level to the Church as the base, grass root level. We shall discuss this in brief

### **A. Baptist World Alliance: The Supreme Baptist Body**

The Baptist World Alliance is the highest body at the international level where the Baptist Churches and organisations of the Baptist are affiliated to it and the small population of the Tangkhul Naga tribe is not an exception and thus affiliated to this organisation through series of level. In the organisation, it is the highest level for the Baptist Churches in the world. It is like a United Nation for the Baptist believers, there

is no higher body or organisation for the Baptist believers. The Headquarter is located in the Virginia, USA.

Baptist World Alliance is for the Baptist of the World, a fellowship of Baptist convention's and unions around the world. There are six continental unions or regional fellowships which acts as body and function as an important part of the organisation and the names are:

1. Asia Pacific Baptist Federation,
2. All Africa Baptist Fellowship,
3. Caribbean Baptist Fellowship,
4. European Baptist Federation,
5. North American Baptist Fellowship, and
6. Union of Baptists in Latin America.

There are many functions and different branches in one regional office but the most important functions and divisions are of the Baptist World Alliance are as follows: Mission, Evangelism & Theological Reflection; Baptist World Aid; Freedom & Justice; Finance & Administration; Communications; and Promotion and Development. There are mainly three departments in the Baptist World Alliance and they are Men Department, Women Department and Youth Department. There are many functions and division with different Department yet they are all bind by one vision under one mission statement.

Mission Statement: Networking the Baptist Family to impact the world for Christ.

Vision Statement: The Baptist World Alliance is a global movement of Baptists sharing a common confession of faith in Jesus Christ bonded together by God's love to support, encourage and strengthen one another while proclaiming and living the gospel of Jesus Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit to a lost and hurting world (<http://www.bwanet.org>).

Though every single Church is attached to this higher authority and body yet a village Church like that of Itham will never have the opportunity to meet or interact or get any direct access to it, the Church of Itham at the highest level will interact at the most with

the Southern Tangkhul Naga Baptist Church (STNBA) or at the level of convention to the Manipur Baptist Convention.

The interaction to the highest body like Baptist World Alliance will be done by the higher council called the Council of Baptist Churches in North East India (CBCNEI) through leadership training either in India or at the Baptist World Alliance Headquarter which is organised and conducted every year and the participation to such program is from the Council of Baptist Churches North East India or sometimes to the Convention level ie Manipur Baptist Convention.

### **B. National Council of Churches in India (NCCI)**

The next organisation in the hierarchy is National Council of Churches in India (NCCI). It is the united expression of the Protestant and Orthodox churches in India. It is a common platform for thought and action by bringing together the Churches and other Christian organizations for mutual consultation, assistance and action in all matters related to life and witness. Ever since its inception the Council and its members are actively engaged in the work of nation building. It is an inter-confessional autonomous Council which embraces, promotes and coordinates the various forms of the church's ministry for the people including the churches and other Christian organizations such as National Council of YMCAs, YWCA of India, Henry Martyn Institute, International Centre for Research, Interfaith Relations and Reconciliation, Churches Auxiliary for Social Action (CASA), Student Christian Movement of India (SCMI), Bible Society of India (BSI) etc.

#### **Primary Objectives**

1. Providing fellowship and a common forum for dialogue and for fostering common concerns among the Churches in India.
2. Promoting Church Unity as a basic requirement for the life and work of the Church in India and as an essential step for restoring in wholeness of the human community
3. Interpreting and communicating the Mission of the Church, relating it to every aspect of life.

4. Engaging in and enhancing the educational, social welfare, relief and health service by the Churches.
5. Representing the Churches before the public, the Government and other national and international agencies.
6. Initiating and promoting action in the area of the socio-political needs of the poor including those of the Christian community in India.
7. To consult and coordinate with the World Council of Churches and other International and national ecumenical organizations.

### **C. Council of Baptist Churches in Northeast India (CBCNEI)**

It is an organization that was formed for the Baptist Christians in the North-eastern part of India. It is a council body which looks after the whole Baptist Christian Ministries in the North-east India. Thus it is the highest council in the North-east India for the Baptist Christians. All the Baptist Christian organizations or churches to be recognised should be affiliated to this Council of Baptist Churches in Northeast India. Therefore the Council of Baptist Churches in Northeast India is the highest council in the Northeast India for the Baptist Christians, all the Churches are indirectly affiliated to it, it is indirect because the local Church is affiliated to the State level Convention and that every State is then affiliated to the Council of Baptist Churches in Northeast India.

Thus as mentioned earlier Itham Baptist Church is affiliated to Southern Tangkhul Naga Baptist Church (STNBA) and this STNBA is affiliated at the higher level to the Manipur Baptist Convention in the State level and then the Manipur Baptist Convention is affiliated to the highest body of the Northeast called the Council of Baptist Churches in Northeast India and it is denoted by acronym of CBCNEI.

Therefore it is major Christian denominational council as far as the north-eastern states are concerned. Furthermore, it is a member of the Asia Pacific Baptist Federation and at the highest level is the Baptist World Alliance. The relation according to the Mission Secretary of Council of Baptist Churches in North-east India diminishes from National Council of Churches in India as it goes higher, it is just an affiliation with not much interaction or responsibility, the relation and the affiliation is crystal clear till the

Council of Baptist Churches in North-east India and hence forth it is just an affiliation rather the contact and the Council's association is directly closer from the Council of Baptist Churches in North-east India to the Baptist World Alliance. The Council of Baptist Churches in Northeast India has about 600,000 members from different Conventions/ Councils at the state level.

There are six conventions/ Councils from the state level which is affiliated to the CBCNEI and they are:

1. Arunachal Baptist Church Council
2. Assam Baptist Convention
3. Garo Baptist Convention,
4. Karbi Anglong Baptist Convention,
5. Manipur Baptist Convention and
6. Nagaland Baptist Church Council.

The purpose of the establishment and the visions that the Council has for the believers in the Baptist doctrine from the North-eastern people are as follows:

*Vision Statement: The CBCNEI envisions facilitating its members to shine in their faithful witness to the truth, to strive in their service to the needy, and to struggle utmost for the unity of His Church, the body of Jesus Christ.*

*Mission statement: With the help of God and His People, the CBCNEI serves and empowers Baptist Churches in Northeast India so that they will be effective in transforming the societies within their own communities; encourages and equips Baptist Churches in witnessing Jesus Christ so that all people groups may come to know Jesus Christ and experience life in its fullness; fosters Unity in Christ in the face of divisive forces working against us; advocates justice and render humanitarian service to the poor and the marginalized; and endeavors to be an agent of peace and reconciliation against ethnic, religious, and political violence.*

Apart from the administering the word of God, the council also has many ministries, departments that carry out different activities but all the ministries and the activities are

inclined to towards the Baptist doctrine of the Christianity, thus all the activities are related to the religion. Some of the important departments, institutions that run under the CBCNEI are as follows:

### **(i) Educational Institutions**

#### **Eastern Theological College: Jorhat, Assam**

Founded in 1905 by the Rev. S.A.D. Boggs, sent by the American Baptist Mission Society now called the Board of International Ministries of the American Baptist Churches in the USA.

Eastern Theological College (ETC), the premier theological and training institute of the Council of Baptist Churches in Northeast India has been catering to the ever growing and diverse needs of the region and even beyond in the field of leadership development for the last 100 years. Today ETC boasts of more than 2500 graduates working in various fields of Christian ministry, including more than 800 serving pastors in rural areas. Also there are other institutions that are recognised and sponsored by CBCNEI and list of such institutions are:

List of the theological Institutions sponsored by CBCNEI member associations are:

1. Oriental Theological Seminary Dimapur, Nagaland - 797 112, India
2. Baptist Theological College T. Chikri, Pfutsero Nagaland - 797 107, India
3. Clark Theological College BPO Aolijen, Mokokchung Nagaland - 798 601, India
4. Manipur Theological College P.O. Kangpokpi Manipur - 795 129, India
5. Trinity Theological College Post Box No. 168, Village: Thahekhu, Dimapur Nagaland - 797 112, India
6. Shalom Bible Seminary Kohima, Nagaland - 797 001, India
7. Harding Theological College Tura, West Garo Hills Meghalaya

### **(ii) Hospital Services**

The Council has six hospitals which are providing healthcare to the sick and the suffering. They are located in four states in the north-eastern region and they are:.

1. Satribari Christian Hospital Guwahati
2. Impur Christian Hospital , Nagaland
3. Tura Christian Hospital Tura, Meghalaya.
4. Jorhat Christian Medical Center
5. Kangpokpi Christian Hospital Kangpokpi, Manipur
6. Babupara Christian Hospital Babupara, Meghalaya.

### **(iii) Conference Centre**

Located on the lush green cool campus of the CBCNEI, the Conference Centre is occupied throughout the year and booking are done way in advance, it also serve as a centre for various CBCNEI meetings, conference, crusade, etc. Attached to the Conference Centre is the Canteen, it is known for its cleanliness, hygienic vegetarian and non-vegetarian food from breakfast to dinner in pure North-eastern style.

Not just the Canteen but with the Conference Centre there is also an internet facility of 24x7.

### **(iv) Students Ministry**

The Council runs three hostels for college students. Through these institutions the boarders have the opportunities to attend Bible camps, vesper services, theological lectures, Bible studies, games and sports apart from their regular college classes.

1. Lewis Memorial Hostel for Boys. Guahati, Assam
2. White Memorial Hostel for Girls, Gauhati Assam
3. Tyrannus Hall for Boys, Shillong Meghalaya

### **(v) Mission Department**

Mission Department is another one strong department and a vital force department of the CBCNEI. It is establish to preach the gospel of God to the whole north-eastern States and even the whole country and the world

In order to fulfill this, the followings are some of the activities: Mission Department undertakes annually, according to Mission Secretary are:

1. Training and Sending Missionaries (Native and Foreign): Under the leadership of the Conventions and Associations' leaders of the Council, we are able to send out hundreds of native and foreign missionaries within and outside India. They are supported by local churches and individuals of the Council. Our target areas include India in general, part of Bangladesh, Myanmar, Nepal, Bhutan, Tibet and other parts of the world.
2. Pastoral Training: We train local Pastors, especially those who could not go for theological trainings, so that they can nurture the young believers into Christian maturity.
3. Church Construction: We support the new congregations to have a worship place by sharing our resources in church building constructions.
4. Conduct Mission consultations and Conference: In order to let every believer hear the Heartbeat of God, we organize Mission Conferences and challenge the churches and individual believers.
5. Social Actions: We establish Christian schools in rural areas to help children get education, and also learn about Jesus Christ so that they will be able to decide for themselves who Jesus is when they grow up. We also have Hospitals to care the sick as a testimony of Jesus' care for them. We also have care centers for HIV+ widows and help their children in their education.

The focus of all these activities is to share the love of God manifested through Christ Jesus and the salvation we have in Him. These activities are carried out through and by the Mission Department of our Conventions (ABC, ABCC, GBC, KABC, MBC, and NBCCI).

#### **(vi) Justice and Peace Department**

The mission of Justice and Peace Department of Council of Baptist Churches in North East India is to proclaim and promote God's desire for justice (Micah 6:8), Christ's call to peacemaking (Matthew 5:9), and the Spirit's reconciling work. (Ephesians 2:11-22)

1. To provide legal assistance to believers and churches who are experiencing legal difficulty in practicing their religious faith because of governmental regulation, intrusion, persecution or prohibition of one form or another.

2. To encourage and train program leaders and local volunteers — primarily lawyers and law students to help remove key legal and other impediments to a fuller life for the poor and oppressed.
3. To provide legal assistance to those whose rights are denied by illegal government action or inaction and law enforcement that improperly targets the minority, poor, and oppressed.
4. To encourage self-help groups and provide education, instruction and training in self-help legal and other remedies for those who are able to address simple, commonly encountered situations or problems.
5. To effectively address the spiritual and interpersonal problems that sometimes contributes to legal problems, poverty and communal tensions.
6. To coordinate and cooperate with other organizations, associations and agencies both Governmental or non-Governmental to fully realize the aims and objectives of the Department.

With the above objectives the Secretary of the Legal Department also presented some of the recent activities and they are:

1. Legal Awareness and Education Campaign: To educate people about their rights and privileges guaranteed by the laws of India and to train law students and young advocates to seek justice and peace in the region, the Department in collaboration with Christian Legal Association of India recently conducted series of legal awareness program among law students and young advocates in Dimapur and Kohima. More than 100 law students and young advocates attended the seminars. More encouraging outcome of the seminar is students pledging to fight corruption in the state of Nagaland. The follow-up to this program is scheduled in December this year.
2. Monitoring Cell: To educate the economically poor and low income groups about the government schemes specially created for them and to monitor proper implementation of those government schemes in the region, the Department is conducting series of case studies in the region.
3. Peace Initiatives: To promote peace in the region, the Department is initiating peace talks between the two warring ethnic groups of the North Cachar Hills. The Department has also initiated relief works among the victims of ethnic violence in North Cachar Hills.

**(vii) Christian Literature Centre**

Another very important centre of CBCNEI is the Christian Literature Centre, it provides various books about the gospel of God, CD, DVD, and other stationery items such as note books, pen, pencil etc. It is located in the campus of the CBCNEI compound

And the Vision Statement of Christian Literature Centre is: “To produce and make available of Life Transforming Resources in Book.

It has branches in

1. Imphal, Manipur
2. Dimapur, Nagaland
3. Ukhrul, Manipur

Apart from the books about the God, they have also tie up with the schools and are now issuing textbooks to more than hundred schools in Manipur, Nagaland and Assam ([www.cbcnei.com](http://www.cbcnei.com)).

These are the activities and the departments and institution that is under the Council of Baptist Churches in North-east India and under this are the various Convention from the Baptist believers from different North-eastern states and all the State level Baptist organisation give their annual report to the Council of Baptist Churches in North-east India.

The report given by the General Secretary of the Manipur Baptist Convention at the Annual Assembly in the year 2012 is attached below:

Respected President and all the official delegates of the 62<sup>nd</sup> Annual Assembly. At the outset, I thank God for having given me this privilege to give you the Annual Report of the Manipur Baptist Convention for the second time in the CBCNEI Assembly after joining MBC ministry. It was February, 2011 when I humbly accepted the new responsibility believing that God does not need me for what I am in myself, but only needs me to manifest His power through me.

When we look at the world today, there's so much confusion and sin. We are often disheartened to see the evil and unfair things happening each day. Even in a tiny state like Manipur, we have witnessed a number of strikes, economic blockades, kidnapping, bomb blasts, brutal killings of innocent people (by identified or unidentified gunmen),

raping of women and ill treatment toward children etc. We also have witnessed bribery, corruption, injustice, immorality etc., rampant in our country and around the world. There are also divisions and conflicts not only among the Christians of different denomination but even within the Baptist family. It is true to say that our world is very chaotic at times. As we look back at the past, God has not led us to an easy and comfortable way. We have faced many problems and difficulties last year. But God has always been with us and has led us thus far in the right way. And we know that He will continue to lead us in that path even in the days to come.

The year 2011 has been eventful and all the Departments of the Convention have also been doing one program or the other.

Honorary Officers:

- Rev. Longam Chara : President
- Rev. D. Lulun : Vice President
- Miss. Ngayailei Chahong : Clerk
- Mr. W. Angkhul : Joint Clerk

Secretaries:

- Rev. Dr. Wungnaoting Konghar : General Secretary
- Rev. SR. Onesima : Finance & Property Secretary
- Rev. Alani Shongsir : Mission Secretary
- Miss. Lhingboi Kipgen : Women Secretary
- Rev. Mathotmi Vasha : Youth Secretary

Heads of the Institutions:

- Rev. Dr. L. Kholi : Principal, Manipur Theological College
- Rev. L. Simon Raomai : Pastor, MBC Centre Church
- Mr. R. T. Johnson Raih : Principal, MBC Hr. Sec. School
- Mr. Ngamkhohao Haokip : Principal, Kangpokpi Mission High School
- Dr. T. Hatzaw : Medical Superintendent i/c, Kangpokpi Christian Hospital
- Mr. Husazu Epao : Principal, Patkai Christian College 2012  
Statistic of MBC

Name of Organisation	No. of Church	No. of Membership
1. Aimol Baptist Association	15	2,128
2. Anal Naga Baptist Association	48	5,372
3. Chin Baptist Association	17	1,915
4. Chongthu Baptist Association	35	3,300
5. Chothe Baptist Churches Association	10	1,245
6. Evangelical Baptist Churches Association	06	545
7. Gangte Baptist Association	13	700
8. Kuki Baptist Convention	264	16,333
9. Inpui Naga Baptist Churches Association	12	2,207
10. Komrem Baptist Churches Association	59	8,934
11. Lamkang Naga Baptist Association	20	2,700
12. Liangmei Naga Baptist Association	67	11,159
13. Meitei Baptist Association	43	1,500
14. Mao Baptist Churches Association	34	7,865
15. Maring Naga Baptist Association	54	6,328
16. Monsang Naga Baptist Churches Association	05	1,056
17. Maram Naga Baptist Association	20	2,790
18. Moyon Baptist Association	10	1,018
19. Nepali Gorkhali Baptist Churches Association	18	1,009
20. Poumai Naga Baptist Association	62	17,613
21. Rongmei Naga Baptist Association	187	23,099
22. Sadar Baptist Association	23	2,906
23. Southern Tangkhul Naga Baptist Association	78	12,980
24. Thadou Baptist Association	50	5,500
25. Tangkhul Baptist Churches Association	79	37,200
26. Thangal Naga Baptist Association	11	1,470
27. Tarao Baptist Association	04	413
28. Vaiphei Baptist Churches Association	04	480
29. Zeme Naga Baptist Association	24	2,811
Total	1,272	1,82,576

**Some Activities of the Convention**

Farewell: MBC Office bade farewell to the following staff during 2011

1. Mr. Ng. Mayonsing, former Development Coordinator
2. Mr. Yangmaso Shokchui, former Guest House & Canteen Manager
3. Mr. Douzahen Guite, former Finance Promoter
4. Mr. M. Mahenlungbou, former Finance Promoter
5. Mr. Sochinguang Ningshen, former Finance Promoter
6. Mr. Benison Phaomei, former Finance promoter

We expressed our deep appreciation to each one of them for the invaluable services they had rendered to the Convention. We wished them all the best.

Appointment of New Staff: During 2011, the Convention was blessed with the appointments of Mr. Wibonbou Abonmai and Themshang Horam as the Assistants in Mission Department and Youth Department respectively. The office was also happy to appoint Ms. Ramtawon K. Shimray as the new Manager of MBC Guest House & Canteen. The Convention also welcomes Miss Jenny Phangjoubam who has joined MBC Women Department as the new Coordinator for Tabitha Compassion Care Centre (TCCC).

Consultation of Cabinet Secretaries and Heads of the Institutions: The five Secretaries and six heads of the Institutions of MBC, including the Vice Principal of MTC spent one whole day (March 4, 2011) discussing and deliberating on the challenges, needs and development of the Convention. The meeting was considered as a very fruitful one.

Ordination: Ph. Dhaneswor, the Executive Secretary of Meitei Baptist Association was publicly ordained to the full time ministries in May 6, 2011.

Meeting with the Former MBC Secretaries & Pastors of MBCCC: The MBC Secretaries had the joy of meeting the former MBC Secretaries and the former Pastors of MBCCC on June 16, 2011. The meeting started with a warm 'welcome back' speech by the General Secretary followed by a delicious lunch. The rest of the day was spent fellowshiping, sharing of past experiences and also discussing about the land issue of the Convention. Both the present and the former Secretaries expressed their desire to

have this kind of meeting again inviting all the former Secretaries of the MBC departments and Heads of the Institutions in the near future.

**Baptist World Alliance General Council Meeting:** I had the privilege to officially represent the Convention in the Baptist World Alliance General Council Meeting (Annual Gathering) held from July 30, 2011 in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. The Council took many important decisions. As it was also an Annual Gathering of the Baptist World Alliance, more than 340 delegates in attendance experienced the marvelous hospitality of the Malaysian Baptists and the warm and unforgettable fellowship of a global gathering.

**IBN Asia Pacific Summit:** I also had the opportunity of attending the International Baptist Network Asia Pacific Summit from August 29 to September 2, 2011 in Bangkok. It was a time to seriously rethink to network with all the Baptists in fulfilling the Great Commission of Jesus Christ. I am also happy to inform you that all my travel expenses were borne by IBN office based in Philippines.

**MBC Secretaries Conference:** MBC Secretaries Conference was hosted by MNBA at Langol Baptist Church from 9th to 11th September 2012 with the theme: “Be My Witnesses”. Rev. Dr. A. K. Lama, the General Secretary of CBCNEI was the speaker of all the worship services. He ministered and encouraged us from the word of God sharing his theological convictions on biblical ministry. The delegates were all blessed by his messages and his presence. The noon sessions were spent in having open discussions and consultations on the development of the Associations and the Convention.

MNBA and the host Church not only provided free food and lodging but also gifted traditional clothes, dresses and bags to all the participants. The next MBC Secretaries Conference is being hosted by Sadar Baptist Association.

**Anti Human Trafficking Seminar:** “Legal Awareness Anti-trafficking and Other Key Legal Issues” was conducted by CBCNEI in collaboration with MBC from September 21 - 22, 2011. Miss Boinu Singson from CBCNEI was the moderator of the whole sessions. Rev. S R Onesima and I led the Bible Studies. The resource persons for the

seminar were: Atungo Shitri, Biju Matthew, IJM, Kokata, Dr. Laban Serto, Babloo and Ksh. Babita Devi. More than 40 Church leaders and heads of the NGOs attended the said Seminar and were benefited. It was a wakeup call for the churches in Manipur to be aware of the legal aspect of life's challenges.

**MBC Pastors' Training:** MBC Pastors' Training was conducted from November 23 - 30, 2011 at MBC Conference Hall. The resource persons were: 1. Rev. L. Simon Raomai, 2. Rev. Alani Shongsir, 3. Rev. SR. Onesima, 4. Rev. Mathotmi Vasha, 5. Miss Lhingboi Kipgen and 6. Rev. Dr. W. Konghar with the subjects Preaching & Counselling, Church & Mission, Leadership & Management, Youth in the Church Ministry, Introduction to the Bible and the Baptist Distinctives. 26 Pastors including a 78 years old Pastor attended the said Training. Certificates were awarded to all the participants on the last day.

**A Consultation of the Interfaith Leaders:** A consultation of the Interfaith Leaders on "Peace Building in Manipur" was organized by MBC on the Eve of Christmas at MBC Conference Hall. Seventeen Christian leaders including five Hindu social activists /leaders attended the meeting. The participants expressed the need to have more consultations of Interfaith on 'Peace Building' in the state.

**Demolition of Shopping Complex:** Due to extension of NH No 2 undertaken by the state Government, a part of our shopping complex adjacent to the main buildings were affected. Repairing work of the same is underway.

**Procurement of Vehicles:** Having sold out the old Bolero, the office could finally purchase a new Bolero last year from the money saved from the old bolero sale and contributions of the Associations. The Mission department has also a new Bolero. Both Youth and Women Departments are also likely to purchase their vehicles very soon. We certainly appreciate all the Associations who contributed their valuable money for the purchase of MBC office vehicles.

**Consultation on HIV/AIDS:** A very important consultation on HIV/AIDS was conducted on October 26, 2011 in collaboration with the Manipur AIDS Control Society (MACS). More than 30 Church leaders of MBC (Imphal based) attended the

meeting. The MBC and MACS have been working together as partners for the last four years.

Evaluation: On December 5, 2011, the MBC staff spent the whole day evaluating the ministries of the Convention – the achievements and failures as individuals and as a team. We followed the SWOT pattern of analysis for this purpose.

Some of the Important Meetings Attended (As a Speaker and as a Committee Member)

1. TBCA Biennial Gathering at Phungyar (February 36, 2011)
2. LNBA Church Leaders Consultation at Tamei (March 1215, 2011)
3. Thoyi Baptist Church Dedication cum 64th Anniversary (April 1011, 2011)
4. Manipur Theological College Board Meeting & Convocation (April 1617, 2011)
5. CLC Board Meeting, ‘Consultation on the Mission Partnership with the International
6. Ministries’ & CBCNEI Executive Committee at Guwahati (April 2528, 2011)
7. CBCNEI Annual Assembly at Nagoan, Assam (April 29 May 1, 2011)
8. SBA Ordained Ministers & Licentiate pastors’ Retreat, Imphal (July 20,2011)
9. A Seminar on “Peaceful Coexistence in Manipur” at ISKON Temple, Imphal (July 2122, 2011).
10. MBCCC Women Society Bible Studies at MBC Centre Church (August 1314, 2011).
11. TBCA Mission Conference at Ramva (September 34, 2011).
12. Phungyo Baptist Church Foundation Day at Ukhrul (September 29, 2011).
13. MBC Mission Conference at MBCCC (October 46, 2011).
14. Eastern Theological College Board Meeting at Jorhat (October 11, 2011).
15. TYAPO 42nd Annual Gathering at Riha (October 14, 2011).
16. CBCNEI Leadership Training & Executive Committee (October 1720).
17. Tangkhul Baptist Ministers Wives’ Retreat at CRC, Imphal (November 9, 2011).
18. Patkai Christian College Board Meeting, Dimapur (November 12, 2011).
19. Tangkhul Baptist Churches Union , Imphal Annual Gathering (November 13, 2011).
20. MBC Executive Council at MBCCC, Imphal (December 2, 2011).

21. RNBA Silver Jubilee at Tamenglong (December 910, 2011).
22. Ringui Baptist Church Platinum Jubilee (December 1011, 2011).
23. Leikoiching Baptist Church Women Golden Jubilee (December 1314, 2011).
24. A Consultation on “Peace Building” organized by AMCO in collaboration with JPMC (Guwahati) at Tribal Research Centre, Imphal (December 19, 2011).

Obituary: Dr. A. Hrasel, the former Medical Superintendent of Kangpokpi Christian Hospital passed away on October 12, 2011 in Aizawl. The office, although could not attend the funeral service, sent a condolence message with as a gift. Rev. Ngaranmi Risom, the former Mission Secretary of MBC left us to be with the Lord on January 9, 2012 at his birth place Hungpung (Hundung). Eight of the MBC staff including three Cabinet Secretaries attended the funeral service with gifts.

### **Conclusion**

As mentioned in my last report, working in MBC is a team work. I do thank my Cabinet Secretaries and all the staff for their unwavering support and cooperation to me. Since last year, we have travelled together many times, visiting the Association Centers and churches, sat together several times even at night till 10 pm discussing many important issues of the Convention and taking the tough decisions together. There are many gigantic hurdles on the road of MBC. However, I consider them as a challenge and opportunity believing that God has a purpose for me and my colleagues to be in MBC ‘for such a time like this’. Above all, I thank God who called me to MBC ministry and has led me this far granting me good health and strength to serve Him through the Convention, despite my limitations and short comings.

Respectfully Submitted

Wungnaoting Konghar

General Secretary, MBC. (<http://www.cbcnei.com>)

### **D. Manipur Baptist Convention: A Brief History and its Activities**

The Manipur Baptist Convention (MBC) is a state level body under the Council of Baptist Churches in North East India (CBCNEI) which is a regional body covering the

entire North Eastern region. Currently there are 28 constituent associations under MBC. MBC as a state level convention has seven full fledged departments or wings.

### **Origin**

In the meeting at Tujangvaichong in the year 1921, a reorganisation was made in the former organisation in order to cope the great movement of Christianity. Therefore under the guidance of Rev. Pettigrew the association was divided into three areas and appointed native workers to look after the areas. Ruichumhao and T. Luikham for the North East areas, Porom Singh and Longkhobel for the Sardar Hills and Helkhup for the North West area. There was another conference at Ukhrul in the year 1921 which was perhaps the third annual Manipur Christian Association meeting whereby 555 members attended the meeting from all areas of Tangkul Nagas, Thadou-Kukis and Anal Nagas. Thus, from 1916 till 1928 all churches in Manipur were included in the one organisation called the Manipur Christian Association.

In 1928, however with the rapid expansion of Christianity in Manipur to various tribes in different geographical areas, the association was reorganised with the name Manipur Baptist Convention within which there were three associations. North East association, Sadar Hills Association and North West Association. Under the guidance of Rev. Pettigrew and Dr. Crozier, the attribute for the creation of Manipur Baptist Convention goes to V. Phanitphang.

The various department of MBC:

1. General Department: The General Department is the overall head of the MBC.
2. Finance Department: Finance Department is one of the major life line of the MBC. The department is headed by a full time finance Secretary who also act as a treasurer. The Finance Secretary works with the Finance Committee consisting of five members whose term of office is three years. Finance Departments chief responsibilities are to raise fund and to over see the over all financial management of the MBC. The Finance Secretary also heads the Property Committee that looks after MBC property.

3. Women Department: The MBC Women Department is one of the major Department of the Convention with the current membership of above 40,000. It also more or less an independent organisation led by its own full time secretary
4. Youth Department: The MBC youth Department is one of the major Department of the MBC. It is headed by a full time secretary called Youth Secretary
5. Mission Department: Mission and Evangelism is another vital organisation of the MBC who is headed by Mission Secretary. Mission Department is responsible for Mission and Evangelism which spread the good news .

Till the year 2008 the numerical strength of MBC was:

1. Association – 29
2. Local Churches – 1272
3. Baptised Membership – 1,82,576.

#### Major Events

1. Golden Jubilee – 1948: The Golden Jubilee of the coming of the Christianity to Manipur was celebrated at Ukhrul on march 4 1948. Dr. And Mrs. Crozier who were among the first missionaries were present. Over 10,000 people gathered for the celebration. A number of Christian in Government positions took active part in the Jubilee reaffirming their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ
2. Platinum Jubilee – 1971: The Platinum Jubilee or the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the coming of Christianity to Manipur commemorated at Motbung Baptist Church on March 11, 1971. Beyond expectation during the celebration the attendance was reported to have swelled up to 20,000.
3. Centenary Celebration – 1996: Centenary celebration was the greatest event in the History of Manipur. Due to the Naga-Kuki ethnic conflict in the beginning of 1991, the situation became quite tensed and it was hard to believe the celebration would be successful. On the eve of the celebration, the Kuki National Front (KNF) notify thought media banning Kukis participation in the MBC Centenary Celebration. A very special appeal was made to the KNF for withdrawal of its earlier prohibition so that everybody might joyfully participate in the historic celebration. The Centenary was to be hosted by Phungyo Baptist Church in Ukhrul as the first Church of Manipur however due to the ethnic conflict the Centenary was celebrated at Imphal during December 5-9, 1996.

## Annual Activities

The main usual annual programme of the MBC are:

1. Executive Council: Every year the MBC executive Council seats for at least 3 times to discuss, decide and bring recommendation to the annual assembly for approval.
2. Annual Assembly: The MBC conduct its annual Assembly to approve the recommendation of MBC convention executive Council and also worship and fellowship. It is normally held in the first week of February every year. The annual Assembly is normal host by an Association
3. Prayer Retreat: Due to the different ethnic tribes and their clashes in the state, the MBC introduced a prayer retreat every year and it is being held district wise led by the MBC secretary.
4. Lay Pastors Training: Most of the MBC local churches in the village level are still being Pastored by lay people therefore to meet the needs of the pastors MBC conduct a week long Pastor training in august every year at MBC Centre Church Imphal. Those who could attend the training for three consecutive year are awarded a certificate.
5. Secretary Conference: The MBC being composed of many ethnic groups with their own association realise the needs of leaders annual fellowship for the purpose of closer relationship, uniformity of practices, sharing of common problems, experiences etc. It started sometime after the National took over the MBC leadership. MBC request Associations to host and the latter find the local church to host on behalf of the Association (Zeliang 2005:74).

## Institution of Manipur Baptist Convention

1. Manipur Theological College, Kangpokpi: Manipur Theological College( MTC) is not only a major institution but only the Theological Institution of MBC. The Institution was established on December 9, 1919 as a Kangpokpi Mission School.
2. MBC Centre Church Imphal: This is one of the MBC Institution and the only church direct owned and managed by the Convention. The centre Church is located at the MBC Campus Imphal. It is truly a unique forum in the state in which all the section of the people or community freely meet together for worship, fellowship and prayer in the spirit of love and unity. It was established in the year 1956.

3. MBC Higher Secondary School, Imphal: It is one of the prominent Institution of MBC. It was first started as a High school at Kangpokpi and then later shifted to the present site at Imphal. Which was gradually upgraded to secondary level. It is one of the leading educational Institution in the State.
4. Kangpokpi Mission High School: It is one of the youngest MBC Institution. After the shifting of MBC school to Imphal in the year 1972, a need was felt for a new school at Kangpokpi.
5. Kangpokpi Christian Hospital: It is one of the oldest Hospital in Manipur and also the only medical Institution Associated with MBC. The Hospital is under the administration of Medical Board of CBCNEI but the day to day administration is carried out under the Administrative Committee of MBC.
6. Patkai Christian College: It is one of the out standing Christian educational Institution in North East India. It is jointly sponsored by Nagaland Baptist Church Council (NBCC) and Manipur Baptist convention (MBC). Being a major sponsor of Patkai Christian College, MBC is entitled to appoint two representatives to the Board of Trustees.

The above account of various MBC institutions depict that each of the institutions is uniquely involved in expanding the wholistic mission of the Church. Manipur Theological College is engaged in preparing the leaders for the churches in Manipur and beyond. The MBC Centre Church has been playing vital roles in not only serving as a centre for MBC but also catering to the spiritual needs of the people at Imphal, the capital town of the state. Kangpokpi Christian Hospital being the only Christian Hospital in the state, it has been rendering the healing ministry to those who are in need of treating the physical ailments. Likewise, the MBC Hr. Sec. School, Kangpokpi Mission High School and Patkai Christian College are also involved in providing quality education in Christian spirit. Therefore, we may well conclude by saying that all these institutions are aptly meeting the needs of the people of Manipur in general and Christian in particular (Zelaing 2005:78).

#### **E. Southern Tangkhul Naga Baptist Association (STNBA)**

When Manipur Baptist Convention (MBC) was formed, the four ranges of Tangkhul hills which holds the new converted Christians were changed into four churches Associations:

1. Northern Tangkhul Baptist Association (NTNBA) Nungbi village was the Association centre for NTNBA where they look after over fifty churches.
2. Eastern Tangkhul Baptist Association (ETNBA) Shangshak khullen was the Mission Centre for ETNBA where they look after over sixty churches,
3. Southern Tangkhul Baptist Association (STNBA) Irong was the mission centre for STNBA where they look after 78 churches.
4. Western Tangkhul Baptist Association (WTNBA). Sirarakhong was the mission center for WTNBA where they look after over forty churches.

All the four Associations were officially affiliated to Manipur Baptist Convention (MBC) separately as four Associations in 1960. Those days there were over 250 Tangkhul Baptist churches in Ukhrul District alone.

However, there was an organization called Tangkhul Naga Baptist Convention (TNBC) which was an umbrella body of all the Tangkhul Baptist Churches which has no affiliation in any higher body. It was formed purely for mutual networking among the Tangkhul Baptist churches.

In latter part of 1980s there was a movement for restructuring of the Tangkhul Baptist churches to see whether all the churches can come under one Association (administrative head). The three Associations; namely ETNBA, NTNBA, and WTNBA agree to become one Association and they eventually formed Tangkhul Baptist Long (TBL) in 1993, where single associations withdrew their affiliation from MBC and reaffiliated under the name TBL as one Association.

Thus the Tangkhul churches were affiliated to Manipur Baptist Convention under two Associations (TBL & STNBA). These two Associations were officially recognized associations for the Tangkhul Baptist churches. The fieldwork I undertook is a Church under the STNBA.

Since STNBA does not come under TBL in 1998, there was also another movement to unite all the Tangkhul Baptist churches, especially TBL and STNBA. In the course of consultations the leaders of the STNBA felt that withdrawing the affiliation from MBC was not acceptable for them. They wanted to have some form of unity among the

churches, like the previous TNBC (by then TNBC ceased to exist as the whole property was taken by TBL as it was a body formed by three Associations). However the leaders from TBL felt that the unity of Tangkhul Baptist Churches should be in the form of one Administration. So STNBA withdrew their participation from the consultation of forming one Association. But the leaders of TBL continued and later decided that the name TBL should be changed into Tangkhul Baptist Churches Association (TBCA) so that even STNBA can come and join under one roof of Church Association for all the Tangkhul and thus TBCA formation was announced and all local churches were asked to take new affiliation to TBCA. This was approved by the Executive Council of MBC in 2002. It was during this time some churches from East and North decided not to take affiliation to TBCA, yet their earlier association called ETNBA and NTNBA remained dissolved so there are some Churches even to the present day which remained unaffiliated to any higher organisation. They wanted to revive the old system of having four Associations and are seeking affiliation from MBC yet this has not come true, the concept of one organisation for all Tangkhul Churches sound good yet there are certain practical problems and many questions remained unsolved and therefore STNBA remained as it is from the inception until now.

Southern Tangkhul Naga Baptist Association with the acronym STNBA more popularly known, is an association for all the Tangkhul that lives in the southern part of the Ukhrul district which borders with Myanmar country and Chandel district of Manipur.

STNBA was formed in the backdrop of uniting the whole Tangkhul Baptist Churches in the Southern region of the Ukhrul district. Therefore all the churches in the southern part of the Tangkhul to be recognised must be affiliated to this organisation. There are around 78 Baptist Churches from the villages under this organisation where the village Baptist church is affiliated to this organisation and as mentioned earlier this organisation is directly affiliated to the Manipur Baptist Convention at the state level.

Like any other organisation, STNBA also has different departments and they are:

1. General Department
2. Youth Department
3. Women Society

Each Department is headed by Secretary called as Youth Secretary, Women Secretary etc and they all work to look after the development of the Baptist Churches in the southern part of the Ukhrul district.

Side by side with evangelical and literacy work to improve their society, different kinds of social welfare organizations were set up at different levels in the Ukhrul District alone to look after the welfare of the people the church earnestly took up all village level problems. Different zones have got their own association and at the tribal level for the whole Tangkhul there is a convention. It should be noted here that there are different denomination even in the small district of Tangkhul community like the Baptist, the Catholic and Seventh Day Adventist etc. Out of these three about 65 percent are Baptist about 20 percent are Catholics and 5 percent are SDA and the rest 10 percent are others. All these denominations, though they have different names, have got the same kind of organization in their hierarchical order. These organizations made arrangement for performing cultural, literacy and different kinds of social activities, like helping the poor and the needy, taking part in different social works for social upliftment and so on. These organization made steady progress and these become the most important instrument for an all round development of Tangkhul society and culture (Ruivah 1993:214-215).

#### **F. Itham Baptist Church**

From the social point of view, the church has to perform many social activities like marriage, divorce and enforcement of moral laws at different social levels. Christian's marriages take place in the church in the bond between the bride and groom with an oath performed in the Church. In the social field the contribution of a Church is very great. If any member is excommunicated from the Church membership for committing any crime, he or she is looked down upon by the society and it become some sort of moral punishment. Moreover the church brings the spirit in oneness as they worship in the Church as equal partners without making any difference between the rich and the poor, between the high and the low, between the literate and the illiterate. This kind of social mixing creates a sense of collective social security among all section of the people in the society (Ruivah 1993:217).

The Church in the village and for that matter every church in the Tangkhul Naga tribe is functioning almost the same, even if there might be slight variation. The Church as we know now is not an independent in itself but an entity, a part of the broader organisation connected to higher body, the village Church which they called as Local Church is connected to a higher body called an association, this association is further connected to the Convention which is also further associated to a higher body like council.

### **The Church**

Church, the institution, concerned with the religious affairs of the Christians came into prominence in the Tangkhul society after converting to Christian. As a religious institution it is the duty of the church to bring about religious consciousness and to deepen the religious faith according to what the bible says, and to bring about ideal Christian life accordingly. Besides this, the institution also acted as an instrument to make the people conscious about their obligation in the society as a social being. The administration of the church is through the principles of self government by means of democratic set up which give them the idea of independent thinking for the betterment of the society as a whole based on morality. This kind of democratic principles in forming the church government makes them conscious politically.

The village Church in their literal term is called as Itham (Nungharam) Baptist Church. Which is headed by a priest called yaokahoma (Pastor). Before going into any further description the main body of the Itham Baptist Church are:

1. Pastor
2. Deacon
3. Deaconess
4. Women Society
5. Christian Youth Society (CYS)

#### **1. Pastor**

He is the head of the Church, he is responsible for the entire success and failure of the Church, specially in the spiritual side of the members, they believe that if the spiritual

side of the human life is strong there will be progress, peacefulness in the daily life of the people and the whole village. He should be an ordained and someone who live a true life. (Shimray 2007:35)

In my interview with the Pastor of a Itham Baptist church quite a number of times, the following are the characters according to him which a Pastor should have:

A pastor is an elder but an elder is not always a pastor. A pastor is the shepherd of the local body. The responsibilities of a pastor are to teach and guide the local congregation in the things of God. A pastor provides spiritual direction and pursues a vision for the Church. Any vision that distracts the pastor or the church from the Great Commission is not of God. To be a leader, one must be pursuing a worthy mission so that he may be an example by service and not by directing others only. The church is not to be like the world around us where a leader leads over those under him. In God's plan, the leader humbles himself, serves the brethren rather than sitting on a pedestal being served by others.

God alone can ordain a pastor. Men may ordain a man that is not called by God, but man-made ordinations are meaningless. Man may refuse to ordain a pastor, but if God has called a man to be a pastor, He will equip him and use him regardless of whether the church organization acknowledges that call or not.

It is God that ordains and calls a pastor. A man does not have the right to choose a calling that God has not chosen. A pastor does not have the right to resign from God's calling either. God calls, equips and gives the increase. Throughout scripture, we see God choosing unlikely candidates that do not appeal to men. God looks on the heart and His strength is made perfect in weakness. He calls the humble and equips. His servants to perform His work. Ordination comes from God alone. It may be acknowledged by the church that is faithfully following God's plan; however, the call and ordination comes from God.

The vision of Jesus Christ was given to the church in the Bible Matthew 28:18-20 to "go and make disciples of all nations, baptize them in Jesus' name and teach them to observe and obey all that has been commanded in the word of God". The pastor's role is to oversee this instruction to the local body, to communicate that vision to the people,

find ways to equip others to answer that call, and implement this into the community through the local church body.

The Pastor of the Church serve the people, the villagers, and is accountable to both God and the people.

## **2. Deacon**

Deacons are like the Cabinet in the political administration, the advisor to the Pastor, the helper, all the decisions of the Pastor are taken with their consent or with their knowledge and working out those decisions and program are done with the Deacons. The Deacon thus play a very important role in church administration. The deacons are appointed every year at the beginning of the year, they serve a one year term though they can be appointed again. They are not paid but they serve for the God. They are the elders in the village, their moral and way of living should set an example as they are just below the Pastor in their role and status.

The Presence of Deacons should advance the unity of a Church and the Deacons are to be capable of serving the Lord in Spiritual ways. No other directions are given in Scripture concerning the work of the deacon. One thing is clear: it is not the job of the deacon to rule the church. Just as there is no such thing in Scripture as a board of elders, there is no such thing as a board of deacons. Authority in the church comes from the Lord to the congregation. Deacons may be authorized by the congregation to serve the church in various ways, but these should be under the same headings found in Scripture. They should help the pastor or pastors with their ministry and help meet the physical needs of the congregation. If that be the case, then the church should look for those who have the gift of “helping” (1 Cor. 12:28) or the gift of “showing mercy” (Rom. 12:8). Without these gifts deacons will not be as effective in fulfilling the ministry to which God has appointed them.

## **3. Deaconess**

The deaconess holds a similar position to a deacon, however no provision is given for their ordination. The duties of a deaconess are very similar to the deacon, with

particular emphasis placed on assistance in running services and the care of the sick. The deaconess is elected to office, serving for a term of one or two years as determined by the local church. It does not follow that the wife of a man chosen as deacon thereby becomes a deaconess, nor is it incumbent upon a church to choose the wife of a deacon as deaconess because her husband is a deacon. The deaconess is to be chosen from the standpoint of consecration and other qualifications that fit her to discharge the duties of the office. The church may arrange for a suitable service of induction for the deaconess by an ordained minister holding current credentials usually by the Pastor.

Deaconesses serve the church in a wide variety of important activities, including: Assistance at Baptisms: Deaconesses assist at the baptismal services, ensuring that female candidates are cared for both before and after the ceremony. They also give such counsel and help as may be necessary regarding suitable garments for baptism. Robes of suitable material should be provided. Where robes are used, the deaconesses should see that they are laundered and carefully set aside for future use.

Arrangements for the Communion Service: The deaconesses assist in the ordinance of foot-washing, giving special aid to women visitors or those who have newly joined the church. It is the duty of the deaconesses to arrange everything needed for this service. The Care of the Sick and the Poor—Deaconesses are to do their part in caring for the sick, the needy, and the unfortunate (<http://www.baptiststart.com>).

#### **4. Women Society**

It was established almost parallel to the main body church, During the research, the leaders of the present women society said that by the grace of Jesus Christ, the Women Society has been functioning very strongly.

Women Society is another very important and a strong part of the Church among the Tangkhul Naga. It is an effective and rich body of the Church. It has various functions and activities. It may function as an independent in itself by organising various programs for the development of the women folks among the Tangkhul Naga women but it is very much an integral part of the bigger body which is the Church, it works in collaboration with the main body i.e Church. They are both reciprocal to each other,

infact it is one of the biggest part of the Church that the Women Society help the Church in many occasions either physically or in financial support for any programs such as Church Construction, Church repairing, or any other programs the helping hand of women is always prominent.

Some of the important functions performed by women society are as follows:

1. In the establishment of the first Church, it was the women who bought half of the CGI Sheet was borned by the women society apart from buying a Saw for the Church construction. Though the amount is small for today yet way back in 1953 it was a huge amount.
2. For the Church purpose an Almerah was bought by the Women Society and presented to the Church.
3. For the construction of the Barn of Church, the Women Society help the Church by contributing Rs. 500/.
4. A contribution was made by cash an amount of Rs.300/ for the wooden Box construction for the Church to keep the Church Money.
5. Kitchen utensils such as plates, cups, pot were also bought for the Church by the Women Society apart from mattress, bed sheet etc for the Church to use.
6. It works hand in hand with the Church by helping the Church in many activities such as financial, human resource etc.
7. It looks into the disputes that arise in the villages specially the disputes between the families or husband and wife, the wmen as a body help to dissolve conflicts and also take action against those who are deviance in the village.
8. Praying and fasting for the Church.
9. Financial help to the individual family if the need arise such as sudden demise, or illness etc.

Apart from all these, the Women society helps the needy, they also help whenever the need arise whenever they feel that there is a need to help the individual, family, or church. There are somany functions of the women society; it is as strong as next to the main body Church.

## 5. Christian Youth Society (CYS)

The youth society is called as Christian Youth Society (CYS). This is indeed another strong body of the Church among the Tangkhul community, it is the wing that look into the welfare of the youths in the community. Every village has this branch of the Church. The youth though function as an independent body but it should not be forgotten that it is a part, a body under the church which has been formed keeping in the mind to look into the youth of the community. The Christian Youth society (CYS) is very much related to the main body Church, they are the physical wing of the main body, as all the physical, strong work of the Church is mainly given to the Youth wing. Apart from the development agenda of the Christian Youth Society they also help the main body which is the Church.

Some of the main activities of the youth are:

Fund raising activities undertaken by the youth, such as working as labourer, going to the field, by the whole youth member and those who could not come to the field on that day, they can pay to the youth the labour amount of one day. If we recollect, in the yore, they have a system called Yarthot where there are specific age group going to the field and working alternately for one another and this system is still in practice here. The only difference is that the group now work in a more organised way and under the banner of the Christian Youth Society. The cleanliness of the whole village is look after by the Christian Youth Society, from time to time the youth will clean the whole village.

Any law and order is first handled by the youth society, any untoward that happen is look by the youth, if the situation is too grave then it can be taken over by the Church. But the first hand investigation or trying to resolve is done by the youth wing.

Another very important role of the Christian Youth Society is the Choir. In every worship they will sit separately in one place and lead the whole congregation in singing hymns. It is this one role that is somehow similar to the dormitory, the youth often meet in one place and practice songs for singing in the Church, in the mean time they also get to know each other, they learn new songs, drama etc. The practice of song drama is more frequent during some important festival such as Christmas. For any occasion, may

it be festival, crusade, conference; something to do with the Church is decorated by the Christian Youth Society. Apart from decorating, they will also serve as guide, helper for any occasion that occur in the village.

Therefore Christian Youth Society (CYS) is a new organisation that was founded after the coming of Christianity, which functions as a strong body under the Church as the main body (Ningshen 2007:24).

This is how the Church is related to each other, this is how they are connected to each other extending even to the neighbouring Church unlike the days of the yore where one village is against another neighbouring village, the organisational level is restricted to the within the village, and every activity, every bit of their lives revolves around and within that particular village such as marriage, festival, rituals and this isolation can be another reason that even within the small tribe like Tangkhul there are so many variations in the cultures, such as marriage rituals, language, festivals etc.

#### **ANNUAL CHRISTIAN YEAR FOR TANGKHUL**

With the coming of Christianity among the Tangkhul Naga and a new religion introduced, the people knowing more about the outside world as they now know how to read and write, the annual cycle of the year is now according to the calendar of the world. The yearly festivals and rituals have a fixed date not like the days in the yore where there was no fixed dates and no fixed months but were living with the seasons and weathers the mother earth was giving. Thus the annual cyclic rituals and festivals of the present Tangkhul can be discuss in the following way.

The annual cycle in the days of the yore was governed by the religion with sacrifices and propitiation to the spirit they served before the introduction of Christianity among the Tangkhul, even today it will never be wrong to say that this yearly cycle is still governed by the religion in the same way as it used to be but now by a new embraced religion called Christianity. Thus with the coming of the Christianity it is now a Christian year, with Christmas as one of the most important festival followed by the Easter Sunday, thus they are celebrating all the Christian rituals and the festivals.

## **A. New Year**

The year of Tangkhul Naga people begin with the New Year celebration.

The New Year is the first festival of the year, New Year is not a religious celebration per se but for the people of Tangkhul Naga, since the time it was introduced by the missionaries it has always been known as a day of worship, a day of prayer. A prayer for the whole year, a day of prayer for the prosperity of the year.

The program and planning for the New year is conjoint with the previous years' Christmas program yet the arrangement and the mood for New Year celebration begins from 31st December. Since New Year celebration has become more like a religious festival, a time to pray for the coming year, a time to reflect the past year and a time self introspection, a time for new year resolution for better living.

The celebration begins with the midnight service on 31<sup>st</sup> of the previous year, ie. 31 December, the villagers generally go to sleep around 7 pm in hills of Tangkhul, on this day most of the people stay awake in groups or even if some of the sleep off, it will be the chime of the bell at 11 pm that will wake them up, the Church bell ringing loud and clear to signify the coming of the New Year and people gather in the Church for midnight service.

The villagers gather in the Church and worship service is held bidding farewell to the old year and welcome the New Year.

The worship service is one important event in the celebration of New Year, the service is held in the following Manner:

### **Itham (Nungha) Baptist Church**

Midnight Worship Service

Date: 31-12-2009

Time: 11:30 pm to 1:30 am

*Leader: Chihanpam Rimai*

*Preacher: Saveson (Local Pastor)*

*Hymn of Praise: KKL No. 393 Kumdhar*

*Announcement:*

*Thanks Giving and sanctifying prayer: Rasangmi Ningshen*

*Special No.: Church choir*

*Scripture reader: Awon Zimik*

*Pulpit Hymn: KKL No.470, Anywhere with Jesus*

*Message: Speaker*

*Closing Hymn: KKL No. 44. Guide me o Thou Great*

*Benediction: Speaker*

One significant thing of the midnight service is that right after the service there will be bonfire outside the Church and people are ask to write down their sins they have committed and after a prayer the paper is burnt down signifying the sanctification, purifying of their sins which they cannot speak out in front of others. This was followed by prayer and renewal of their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. After this worship service of the midnight, they wish each other Happy New Year and the villagers dispersed and they all go to bed.

In the morning there will be another worship prayer and right after the service villagers do not go back to their house but they spent the whole day in the Church Fasting and praying.

During the day, various messages were delivered, various songs sung, and prayers are said for the coming year. Thus the New Year day, the 1<sup>st</sup> day is spent in praying.

The fasting of the morning without lunch goes till around 2 pm after which they will all go home and to rest and cook for the dinner. In the case of a smaller village like Itham, the whole villagers will have dinner together by killing pig or India boar. It is a New Year feast, where all the family will cook their own rice from home and come to the village play ground or in the compound of the Church where the curry will be served. This is a festival, a feast for all the villagers to celebrate together. The money is contributed per family, New Year celebration is usually planned along with the Christmas, so there will no new money subscription for New Year feast, and there is no much extra work to do for New Year except the killing of Pigs or the meat that will be served as curry and cooking of that meat. The cooking of curry is done by deacon of the Church, after the fasting prayer for the whole day, while the women cook the rice in their respective homes, the male members or the elders in the family usually the deacon will cook the curry.

The whole arrangement is coordinated so well that it does not take time to kill and cook the meat for the feast. At the end of the service of the fasting prayer it will announce the necessary plan or program. Where the Deacon will kill the pig, the Youth Department plays an important role in cleaning of the pot, making fire for cooking and the female members of the youth will fetch water for the cooking. As mentioned earlier, there are two to three water storage tanks in the village so the girls will fetch it from the tank till the cooking place.

After the dinner, the whole village come together once again to celebrate by singing songs, drama, dance, and different items are being perform by all the villagers specially the youth of the village will lead in entertaining themselves which will last till midnight. This is called social gathering. The program ends once again by prayer will be pronounced by the village Pastor or any respected elder present there.

New Year is called *Kumdhar* in the lingua franca of Tangkhul. New year is the first day of the year, the beginning day of another year, New Year is not an invention of the Tangkhul Naga nor a Christian religious festival though New Year is a time of special importance for Christians marked by prayer for the whole year for bountiful harvest, to let it be a year of luck, which they called it as a *sokhame*.

### **B. Palm Sunday**

This festival is not confined to Tangkhul but it is a religious festival of Christians and Tangkhul people are not exception to this and it is important from the religious point of view. For the Tangkhul people, the enthusiasm begins by Saturday a day before the palm Sunday where the Christian Youth Society (CYS) of the village will clean the Church, this is the first cleaning of Church and its compound after Christmas, the decorations done during Christmas is removed on this day and new decoration is done. While some of the youths will go to the jungle to collect palm leaves the rest will pull down the Christmas decoration, clean the whole Church and redecorate the Church again to welcome the triumphal entry of Jesus Christ. On the Sunday morning the bell rings at 6:30 am and the whole village gather once again for the worship singing “Hosanna to the King”. There is no other celebration on this day apart from the Church worship service in the morning and in the evening.

The significance of Palm Sunday for the Christian is that it is on this day that Jesus enter into Jerusalem, the week before his death and resurrection. For many Christian churches, Palm Sunday, often referred to as “Passion Sunday,” marks the beginning of Holy Week, which concludes on Easter Sunday (<http://christianity.about.com>).

“And the multitudes that went before, and that followed, cried, saying, Hosanna to the son of David: Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord; Hosanna in the highest” (Matthew 21:9) ( Bible).

Palm Sunday is the day we remember the “triumphal entry” of Jesus into Jerusalem, exactly one week before His resurrection and the Bible reveals that when Jesus entered Jerusalem, the crowds greeted him by waving palm branches and covering his path with palm branches. Immediately following this great time of celebration in the ministry of Jesus, he begins his journey to the cross. The biblical account of Palm Sunday can be found in Matthew 21:1-11; Mark 11:1-11; Luke 19:28-44; and John 12:12-19.

It is referred to as Palm Sunday because of the palm branches that were laid on the road as Jesus rode the donkey into Jerusalem. It is said that this verey day was foretold by many prophets so many years ago (<http://www.sharefaith.com>).

### **C. Holy Week**

The week immediately preceding Easter or Resurrection Sunday ie a week after the Palm Sunday is the Holy Week. It is observed in many Christian churches as a time to commemorate and enact the suffering (Passion) and death of Jesus through various observances and services of worship. While some church traditions focus specifically on the events of the last week of Jesus’ life, many of the liturgies symbolize larger themes that marked Jesus’ entire ministry. Observances during this week range from daily services in churches to informal meetings in homes for prayer (<http://www.crivoice.org>).

This passion week is not exception to the people of Tangkhul, after Palm Sunday the Pastor and the Deacon will decide the next course of action and inform the villagers about the week, it is usually a week of chain prayer where every household is assign days to pray and the family pray for their own family, relatives, for the villagers, for the leaders etc.

It is this dimension that is well served by Holy Week observances, as they call us to move behind the joyful celebrations of Palm Sunday and Easter, and focus on the suffering, humiliation, and death that is part of Holy Week. It is important to place the hope of the Resurrection, the promise of newness and life, against the background of death and endings. It is only in walking through the shadows and darkness of Holy Week and Good Friday, only in realizing the horror and magnitude of sin and its consequences in the world incarnated in the dying Jesus on the cross, only in contemplating the ending and despair that the disciples felt on Holy Saturday, that we can truly understand the light and hope of Sunday morning was the very words of the Pastor of the village.

The entire week between Palm Sunday and Holy Saturday is included in Holy Week, and some church traditions have daily services during the week but this is not the case for the people of Tangkhul though there is no everyday service but the door of the church is kept open for the whole week and people come to pray, it was observed that mostly the elderly women come to pray in the Church and people are not restricted to do their work on this holy week, they carry on as regular weeks but with the consciousness of the week as Holy week and the Church Service are held only on Palm on Sunday, Good Friday and Easter Sunday and this are the times of special observance in Christian Churches including Tangkhul Naga people.

#### **D. Good Friday**

Good Friday is another religious festival which is very important for the Tangkhul people after the conversion into Christianity. Friday of Holy Week has been traditionally been called Good Friday or Holy Friday. On this day, the church commemorates Jesus' arrest, his trial, crucifixion and suffering, death, and burial.

Even among the Tangkhul's there are a variety of services of worship for Good Friday, all aimed at allowing worshippers to experience some sense of the pain for the dead of their Lord Jesus Christ yet a sense of happiness for the deliverance from their sin making every human being a new creation, and an ending in the journey to the cross. The most common form of worship and the same thing that is practiced in Itham village is that the bell chime loud early in the morning around 6 am and the whole villagers

gather in the Church for the worship service followed by fasting. The worship service is common for all the people in the village young and old but after that morning service the children and those who does not want to participate in the fasting after the Church service for sickness or for one reason or other can leave the Church after that the fasting prayer begins that will last till 2 pm in the afternoon. The fasting is a prayer of mourning with the Lord Jesus Christ, happiness for the deliverance from the sin through the blood of Jesus Christ, the blood washing away the sins of human, a sacrifice of the son of the Lord for the people. On this day people pray for their soul, the sin, a confession, a prayer for the near and dear ones and to live an exemplary life, to purify themselves and to live a life like Jesus. Usually in the village the fasting is held somewhere outside the Church, in a nearby forest where they find a place to sit down and pray. But in Town or bigger village the fasting is done in the Church itself. After the whole day fasting the people come back to their respective homes and have early dinner and the whole village gathers again in the Church around 4 pm for the evening worship service it is spend like a proper Sunday.

Some of the most common scripture that is usually read on this day are:

“Father, forgive them for they know not what they do (Luke 23:34). My God, my God why have you forsaken me (Matthew 27:46, Mark 15:34). Father into your hands I commit my soul” (Luke 23:46).

So Good Friday is observed on the Friday before Easter Sunday. On this day Christians commemorate the passion, or suffering, and death on the cross of the Lord, Jesus Christ. Many Christians spend this day in fasting, prayer, repentance, and meditation on the agony and suffering of Christ on the cross. The biblical account of Jesus' death on the cross, or crucifixion, his burial and his resurrection, or raising from the dead, can be found in the following passages of Scripture: Matthew 27:27-28:8; Mark 15:16-16:19; Luke 23:26-24:35; and John 19:16-20:30 (<http://christianity.about.com>).

### **E. Easter Sunday**

After the Friday mourning, Easter Sunday is a day of joy, a day of celebration for every Christian among the people of Tangkhul. After the Good Friday the next day Saturday

is spent in hunting wild animals to feast on the Easter Sunday, the whole village try to find whatever they can for Easter Sunday feast, those who can hunt will go deep in the jungle to hunt for wild animals, those who are good in fishing will go to the river for fishing, and this hunted animals or the fish is kept at one place to be cook on the Sunday morning and on the Easter Sunday the whole village gathers again in the Church for the worship service in the morning around 6:30 am, while few elders in the village stay back to cook for the meat they have brought and after the service the whole village gathers again bring their own food and feast together. It is the mothers who wake up early and cook rice before going to Church and bring that rice to the ground or the Church compound where the feasting place will be arranged. This Sunday is another happy day for all the Christians and this is not an exception for the people of Tangkhul

Easter or Resurrection Sunday is the day Christians celebrate the resurrection of Jesus the Christ from the dead. Even before theologians explained the death of Jesus in terms of various atonement theories, the early church saw his resurrection as the central witness to a new act of God in history and the victory of God in vindicating Jesus as the Messiah. This event marks the central faith confession of the early church and is the focal point for Christian worship. Easter has occupied a central place as the high point of Christian worship (<http://christianity.about.com>).

After the feast the people take rest, they meet up friends, near and dear one and spend chatting the whole day until the evening bell chime again and the people gather for the evening worship service.

The biblical account of Jesus' death on the cross, or crucifixion, his burial and his raising from the dead, can be found in the following passages of Scripture: Matthew 27:27-28:8; Mark 15:16-16:19; Luke 23:26-24:35; and John 19:16-20:30.

#### **F. Mother's Day**

Mother's Day is a celebration honouring mothers and celebrating motherhood, maternal bonds, and the influence of mothers in society. It is celebrated on various days in many parts of the world, yet most commonly in May.

Celebrations of mothers and motherhood occur throughout the world but for the people of Tangkhul Naga the concept of celebrating Mothers Day came with the coming of Christianity, with the coming of the script, with the interaction to the outside world. With the coming of Christianity it has given them a sense of responsibility, a sense of thankfulness to the mothers that gave them birth and take care of them until they grow up and also a concerned even if the children has grown up, on this day the Tangkhul people pray for their mother, for health, longevity etc.

For the children who are away from home for studies or work sent their mother gifts, mother's day card etc showing their love and gratitude to the mother.

In the village it will be another Sunday, the second Sunday of May, so on this day people gather in the Church for usual Sunday worship but special time is taken up to pray for the mothers, during the service special songs are sung for mothers, all the mothers are ask to stand up and prayers are said for them and apart from just prayer it is the Men's society that will arrange small gifts for all the mothers in the village and it is distributed in the Church, the gifts are usually utensils, or clothes that are useful for the women in their daily use or for the kitchen purpose, this gift is not arrange individually but by the Men's society as a whole taking money from their fund and buying for all the married women. It is on this day that married women who do not have child feel left out and long to have children as all the children greets their mother, make them feel special. It is not a religious festival but indeed a very important even for the people of Tangkhul, taking a day out for the mothers giving gifts and praying for the mothers.

The exact date may vary ut in general and even in India, Mothers Day is celebrated on the second Sunday of the month of May and this is followed even by the Tangkhul people. This day gives them all the opportunity to celebrate such a day for their mother making the mother special for all the effort, the love the support they gave it to their children and thus it has made a deep impact even to a small tribe like Tangkhul Naga in Manipur. In the Church, during the worship Bible verses are read out from the Bible and prayers are said for the mothers.

Bible Verses for Mothers: Exodus 20:12, Psalm 139:13, Proverbs 14:1 , Proverbs 18:22, Proverbs 31:10-12 and 25-31 etc. (<http://www.heavensinspirations.com>).

### **G. Father's Day**

Like the Mother's Day, Father's Day is a day of prayer for the father in the house. It is again celebrated on the third Sunday of June.

Father's Day is the day that children and wives are supposed to honour the father by giving them respect for being providers, protectors, moral and spiritual leaders. The people of Tangkhul thus spend this day as a day for the father. As it fall on the Sunday, they will gather in the Church as just another Sunday but there will be a time for the Fathers to pray for them, the whole Church congregation will pray for the Fathers and gift will be given to all the Fathers in the Church which is usually arranged by the Women Society. Bible verses are read and preaching on this day is emphasised on the fathers about their love, their role in the family, the responsibility of the father etc are taught in the Church and individual gifts are also given to them by their children Those children who are away from home for studies or work usually send them gifts, and these days with mobile phones available they call up their their father and greet them.

For the people of Tangkhul it is a day of prayer and thanks giving to their father as well as to the God. The characteristic of a responsible father is taught and shown by the Jesus himself and Fathers day has become an important part of the annual cycle year playing an important role in life of the people of Tangkhul both young and old, for both children and parents.

It is not just the routine celebration of Fathers day and Mothers day but as Christians it is the fear and obedience to what the Bible, the Holy book for the Christians which they trust and read almost every day (<http://lnger.wordpress.com>).

### **H. Christmas**

For any Tangkhul Christmas is indeed one of the most awaited celebration. It is a celebration and a festival that is given the most importance among all the festivals and rituals after they converted to Christianity. Ask any individual about the Christmas they have spent and their face lift up with smile, the fond memories they have about the past and the plans they make about the coming Christmas, it is said that Christmas planning for next year begins as soon as the present Christmas is over.

Christmas is both a sacred religious holiday and a worldwide cultural and commercial phenomenon. Christians celebrate Christmas Day as the anniversary of the birth of Jesus of Nazareth, a spiritual leader whose teachings form the basis of their religion. Popular customs include exchanging gifts, decorating Christmas trees, attending church, sharing meals with family and friends and, of course, waiting for Santa Claus to arrive. It is supposed to be celebrated on 25 December every year. But among the people of Tangkhul the celebration begins from 24 December lasting till 28 December, in some villages specially in the Northern and Western Part of Tangkhul region the celebration of Christmas reaches till the New year, making it a weeklong celebration. Though Christmas is on 25 but there is no fixed date or any rule as to how long they should celebrate and a particular village may celebrate for just two days in one year and may celebrate for a week next year, it depend on the Christmas committee which they appoint every year to look into the program every year and this committee is not appointed for the rest of their life but it keep changing every year. The committee is appointed during the month of October or beginning of November so that all the necessary arrangement are made way back in advance, there are villages which appoints Christmas Committee in the beginning of the Year when the village gathers for yearlong planning at the beginning of the year.

The historic record of the birth of Christ can be found in in the Bible in the book of Matthew 1:18-25 and Luke 2:1-20 (<http://www.history.com>).

Unlike any other baby, the one born that night in Bethlehem was unique in all of history. He was not created by a human father and mother. *He had a heavenly pre-existence* (John 1:1-3, 14) . *He is God, the Son—Creator of the universe* (Philippians 2:5-11). This is why Christmas is called the incarnation, a word which means “in the flesh.” In the birth of Jesus, the eternal, all-powerful and all-knowing Creator came to earth *in the flesh*.

Jesus Christ being the founder or central figure of “Christianity” so Christmas is a Christian festival celebrated on December 25 to commemorate the birth of Jesus (<http://christianity.about.com>).

The people indeed wait for Christmas with great enthusiasm, from the beginning of the year they plan as to what to do, students and family who are settled outside plan to go to their village for Christmas to be with family, near and dear ones and families back in the village start rearing pig, cow, Indian boar to be killed in the Christmas. As I happen to witness Christmas during my fieldwork here is the case study of the festival that is most important to the people of Tangkhul as Christians.

### **Case Study of Christmas**

By 20<sup>th</sup> of December most of the villagers residing outside the village started reaching the village and it continue till 24<sup>th</sup> December and the villagers started storing domestics needs for the rest of the month, specially collecting woods, washing clothes, cleaning houses, painting decorating, erecting stars, flags outside their home etc.

There is a tradition of going to Imphal the capital of Manipur to buy new cloths for their children and for themselves and bring sweets, biscuits and all the things that are necessary for the celebration, though the village is not properly connected by road for plying bus, but during Christmas vehicles such as Jeep, Sumo, Bolero and other four wheeler does not stop plying bringing people from outside the village and villagers going to Imphal for Christmas shopping. One suddenly feels the village coming alive and the festive mood is never absent even in the small village like Itham.

It is on the 24<sup>th</sup> that the real arrange at the Church level begins, by 6 am Christmas songs are played through mike and people suddenly wake up to the song of Chritmas being played in the Church through a loud mike and the bell rings loud, then the youths assemble in the Church by 8 am after early lunch. The youth lead by their leaders gathers in the church with all the decorating materials, spade, Dou, broom knife etc. After greeting each other and a prayer by their leader they divide the works, some will clean the Church and decorate with new flowers, decorating papers while some of them will clean the whole village from first house ill the last one, they sweep the whole village, and some will decorate the ground making stage, hall etc. This work consumed the whole day and the elders on this day will kill the meat they bought and in the evening those who work for the whole day, the youths and the elders will eat together and went back to their own respective home only to get ready for the midnight service.

By 11 pm the Church bell rings and the first welcome midnight service is held which will last till 1-2 am in the morning, in the midnight service, they pray, will sing and preach the word of Jesus Christ, it is believed that Jesus Christ was born at midnight in Bethlehem so in order to welcome, to rejoice they have this service and the celebration of Christmas begins. After the service while the elders go back to sleep, the youth will make local bread baked by themselves and have tea and spent the night in singing gospel hymns.

By 25<sup>th</sup> December morning the bell rings again around 7 am and people once again gathers in the Church for the worship.

The worship is mostly about the thanks-giving, happiness about the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ and taking time to renew their faith, spiritual life in the Lord.

The Worship Service was arranged as:

### **Morning Worship Service**

Date: 25-12-2009                      Time: 6:30 to 8:30 am

*Leader: Mashugmi Ningshen*

*Preacher: Wungreingam (Headman)*

*Hymn of Praise: Away in a Manger (KKL No. 374)*

*Announcement:*

*Intercessory Prayer: Honesty Ningshen*

*Special No.: Church choir*

*Tithes and offering: Gather in the sheaves (KKL No.47)*

*Offertory Prayer: Local Pastor*

*Pulpit Hymn: No born king like Jesus (KKL No.570)*

*Message: Speaker*

*Closing Hymn: Joy to the world ( KKL No. 49)*

*Benediction: Speaker*

When the bell rings, Christmas songs started playing in the mike loud and clear that the whole village can hear, not just the village but even the neighbours and there are also time when they also hear Christmas songs playing from the neighbouring village. With the songs playing loud it was the choir that reach the Church first then they switch off the song playing in the mike and started singing hymns by themselves through mike, it

was indeed a lovely feeling to wake up to such hymns singing, then slowly the whole village gather in the Church and the worship service began.

The Leader is the one who lead the service, he is to lead the service just for that worship, when the whole village had gathered the leader stand up and said lets us begin the worship, until the village gathers and until the Leader stand up to begin the worship the choir keeps singing hymns of praise, the songs of Christmas.

The leader read out a Bible verse:

1. The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.
2. As it is written in the prophets, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee.
3. The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.
4. John did baptize in the wilderness, and preach the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins.
5. And there went out unto him all the land of Judaea, and they of Jerusalem, and were all baptized of him in the river of Jordan, confessing their sins.
6. And John was clothed with camel's hair, and with a girdle of a skin about his loins; and he did eat locusts and wild honey;
7. And preached, saying, There cometh one mightier than I after me, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to stoop down and unloose.

I indeed have baptized you with water: but he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost (Mark Chapter 1: 1 to 8).

Then the leader said lets pray, he said the prayer in the following lines:

Kasa akhava Vare Vara, aja morei kaphunga nano mayara ithum wuivang nanao mayara na khara zimiksho hili ithum naming khorum kida rakazip haire, nana lumashan mida meeting hi haokaphok eina khangachang eina tanga rathan milo, programli sharuk khuiki kachi mikatongali thanmilo, matailak eina ishi matuime li nana rangayur mida ithum saikora nawui tui ngana khangarum hi eina sokhami samphangke.

Rakazip kahaiya ngana khuikida khalei ithum katongali nana somilo da narao khangachana ina seiha Sali.

Naming china remeikap rano Amen.

The prayer can be translated as:

Cerator of Heaven and Earth, in the day of the coming of Thy son for the sinners on this earth we come before you to worship you. With your grace may we begin our worship, be with us from the beginning till the very end, bless all the people in this worship service and we specially pray for the Speaker who will bring your message, speak to him and through him may we all be blessed.

Bless the entire congregation, for I pray in your name.

May your name be glorified Amen.

After this prayer the leader gave time for announcement in which the Christmas Secretary came forward and inform that:

1. There will be evening service of worship
2. The lunch will be served right after the service where all the family should come with the rice they have cook at home in the ground of the village
3. He also read out about the various tithes and thank giving with their names and amount and the amount for that morning alone was Rs.10200 (ten thousand two hundred only).

After which there was intercessory prayer lead by one church senior member, various prayer items were read out such as: let us take time to thank God for brining us another Christmas, let us examine ourselves, let us pray for the Christmas celebration, let us pray for all the villagers, let us pray for our spiritual life etc.

After which there was a mass spoken prayer about the said prayer points where everyone raised on their feet and pray audibly.

After that the time was given to the choir to present a special number, the song was in Tangkhul dialect singing about the birth of Jesus Christ.

This was followed by collection of offerings, offerings were collected from every individual and that was sanctified and prayed by Pastor of the Church.

This was followed by scripture reader who read out from the Bible about which the speaker will be basing on.

That was followed by pulpit hymn, where all the congregation raised once again and sing welcoming the speaker.

After the pulpit song the speaker came to the pulpit and until he speaker ask them to sit the whole congregation was on their feet and when speaker ask them to seat they all seat down and the message began.

The message spokes about the love of God, the need to be closer to him, to know about the real meaning of Christmas, the speaker said that these days Christmas is celebrated mostly for fun which is wrong, it is a time of revival, a time of renewal of our faith in the lord, a time to come closer to God not physically but spiritually.

The message lasted for around 50 minutes after which the worship ended with another hymn as closing song and the closing prayer was pronounced by the speaker himself.

Then the villagers dispersed only to be gathered again in the ground of the village with rice, boil etc, where the main dish was cook at one place by the cooks appointed for Christmas.

The whole village come together on the ground and this was the first Christmas feast together, before eating the Local Pastor prayed for the feast to be sanctified and to let them have fellowship through the feast.

After the lunch on 25<sup>th</sup> December, afternoon was spend on marching and carol singing visiting each and every household and the family offered something or the other to the coming carol group. The offerings were yam, beans, sugarcane, banana, fruits, pumpkin, money, etc and all the collected offerings were once again gathered on the play ground of the village and which was auctioned off. It is on this Carol singing that they used to see whose house was decorated the best, whose house was most tidy up etc and prices were given to the most tidy house of the village.

They dispersed in the afternoon around 2 pm, where they go back to their own respective house to cook, clean, and rest.

Not before too long the bell rings again for dinner around 4 pm for dinner and the whole village will once again gather on the playground for dinner. Rice is the only

stable food for the people of Tangkhul Naga so they cook rice at their won house, along with they cook some boil and the appointed cooks will prepare one meat and the whole village will gather at the ground to eat together.

After the dinner they all meet again for the evening worship service which lasted till 7 pm. The celebration does not end that day by the evening worship service it is after the service that the real fun begins.

Big bonfire was made in the play ground and the whole village gather there for entertainment, it should not be forgotten that this entertainment begin with a prayer from the Pastor and this entertainment end with a prayer again from any Church elders.

During the entertainment programs, Christmas carols were sung, all arrangement were made, everyone gather before the fire place and various competition items were taken out such as sinigng competition, drama competition, traditional folk song competition, traditional folk dance competition, various jokes, etc are performed and they all have fun. At the gathering tea is provided, sweets are distributed, and this gathering last till 11 to 12 midnight after which they all dispersed with a word of prayer in the end.

#### 26<sup>th</sup> Day

There is no worship service on this day, the villagers gather once again for the feast to be eaten together at the ground. After the lunch they spend the day playing such as volley ball, football etc are played between the married women and unmarried women, between married man and unmarried man, between married man and married women etc and thus the whole day is spent playing and entertaining there was one-time tea in the afternoon.

Dispersing again around 3 pm they all meet again for the dinner around 5 pm and the dinner was once again served at the village play ground.

The night is also spent again in the same manner entertaining with various items, cracking jokes, singing, drama, dance, etc with bonefire.

## 27<sup>th</sup> Day

The villagers gather once again for the common lunch around 8 am and the day continues with entertainment with a variety of sports, practicing traditional dance, traditional songs etc which lasted until 2 pm.

After the common dinner the villagers once again gather in the village ground and there was another worship service, the last worship of the Christmas conducted in the ground itself probably because all the benches and other items of the Church were already brought to the ground, after the service there were carol singing and the entertainment which lasted till midnight.

This day being the last day of the Christmas for the year the gathering ends with lots of nostalgia and carol singing.

The villagers now wait for the New Year to come, these days from 28 till New Year are also spent in festive mood, no much work is done, the people rest, chat with friends and family or neighbours and the villagers as a whole.

The celebration of Christmas does not necessarily confine till 27, there are years in which they celebrate till 28 or there are years which lasted till New Year.

## **CHRISTIAN RITES OF PASSAGE**

The Tangkhul Naga like any other Christians' life, the rites of passage are now confined to the Christian religion, the functions and rituals are governed by the Christian aspect of life, and these rites of passage are also considered to be sacraments by Roman Catholics. Christian rites of passage include child dedication, baptism, marriage, and funeral rites.

As we go through life, we come to some major 'milestones' - significant events and moments that may be marked by a party, a ceremony, or for Christians, a particular service in church. They celebrate the birth of a child, deciding to be a Christian for oneself, getting married and even death. These 'rites of passage' for Christians of various denominations may be celebrated in different ways from one another, and even within the same denomination, individual churches may vary in what they do to some extent.

**A. *Nao Khavai* (Pregnancy)**

The Tangkhul today, after converting to Christianity, the life cycle confine to almost the same as other Christian society, unlike the olden days before the coming of Christianity where there were lots of restriction as to eat this or not eat, a place to go and not to go during pregnancy is not seen anymore. The present Tangkhul women during pregnancy at the most pray to their God for the baby and her health and visit physician in most cases, but if they could not visit a physician, they do take care of themselves and the advices of the elders are obeyed very carefully. Apart from praying for the health of the baby and the mother nothing much is done during the pregnancy periods.

**B. *Kaphara Kala Naochikat* (Birth and Dedication)**

When a child is born to a Tangkhul Community, they experienced the joy and excitement shared by the parents and near and dear ones as they witnessed new life come into the world. The family forgetting their poor rejoice at the birth of the new born baby, the people of the Tangkhul consider the baby as the gift from God. Though during my research, complains of having too many children by their elder sons and daughters have come to light but according to the elders, they said that such kind as family planning come into existence in the last one or two decade. The family celebrates the birth of the baby by killing a pig or cow if it was the first born son. In normal time there is no celebration as such during the birth even if there is, it will be a close family and relative celebration. As soon as the child is born, they called the Pastor or any family elder to pray for the baby, to lay hand and bless the baby.

Dedication is the first and most significant aspect of Christian's life. After a month or so when the mother and baby are in good health and able to attend the Church service, the baby is carried to the Church and dedicated. During the Sunday worship service of the village, the Pastor of the village will called out the parent and the child before the congregation in the pulpit where the pastor will ask certain question to the mother.

The events can be narrated as:

When the mother and father of the baby come out in front of the congregation with the baby the pastor asks the following question and the parents answer in the form of Yes or No.

1. Do you (taking the name of both the parents) believe that the child is the precious gift of God?
2. Do you both believe that you should raise the child teaching the gospel of God?
3. Will you both set a good example of living in front of the baby as you raise the baby?

After asking these the Pastor reads some Bible text and raises his hand and prays for the family.

Some of the most often read Bible verses for the Baby dedication are:

*Psalm 127:3 Children are a gift from the LORD; they are a reward from him.*

*Isaiah 44:24 "This is what the LORD says—your Redeemer, who formed you in the womb: I am the LORD, who has made all things, who alone stretched out the heavens, who spread out the earth by myself..."*

*Matthew 18:10 "Beware that you don't look down on any of these little ones. For I tell you that in heaven their angels are always in the presence of my heavenly Father."*

The Prayer may vary from individual pastor to pastor as there is no specific codified prayer but most of the prayers are on these lines:

### **Prayer**

Gracious God, Giver of all life

We thank you for the new life that you have added to this family

We pray for the new born baby

Give him wisdom and may he grow knowing you

We also pray for the parents

Give them wisdom and patience.

Let your peace and joy dwell in their homes.  
Strengthen them in faith.  
Be gracious to them.  
Draw them to yourself.  
Help them to love and trust Jesus.  
We pray that you will grow them in faith,  
So that they will be your faithful servants  
In Jesus name we pray  
Amen.

On asking the parents after the service for the purpose of bringing the baby in the Church their answer were: We wanted to thank God in front of all the congregation, and at the same time make it clear that we understood that and it is our Christian beliefs children are His blessing so we need to thank God and for the future of the baby. So at each birth of the child we had a service of dedication for each child. Members of the Church, friends and all the believers attend the usual Church service in one of our usual Sunday morning services. It was at the usual service time and not a “family-only” affair. During the service, the baby was brought to the front of the congregation, when everyone joined the pastor with special thanksgiving prayers.

We as parents made a commitment to bring up the child in a Christian, loving family, where they would learn about the love of God. The members of the Church present promised to help us as parents to bring the child up in a Christian home. In this way, the entire congregation thanked God for the child and prayed that each one would make its own decision to follow Jesus as their Lord and Saviour.

It can be said that the life of Christians are simple enough, apart from the dedication there is nothing much until the wedding. The naming of the child is a family affair, the name can be given by the parents or the grandparents or any of the family or it can even be close friends and relative or even by the Pastor in the Church. There are birthday celebration which is done at individual level, calling the pastor to pray for them and eat together the family with the pastor and relatives along with the friends of the birthday boy or the birthday girl. But at the village level people are poor and busy so this type of

birthday celebrations is rare. But even among the Tangkhul Naga, those who are settled in the metro cities, birthday celebration is now considered as an important function where the pastor of the Church will be called and prayed for or the children may celebrate birthday in the school.

### **C. *Rakahik* (Baptism)**

It is a Christian faith that even if one is born as Christian or in the Christian family yet to go to heaven one must take water baptism. It is to take a person who has repented toward God and put His faith in Jesus Christ and publicly confessed him as Saviour and baptism is prerequisite to church-membership. When the child is young they dedicate and the name is written down in the record of the Church but when that child took baptism then he is now a responsible member of the Church.. So every Christian took water baptism usually around the age of 13-18 by the hands of an ordained Baptist preacher by the authority of a Baptist Church.

The apostle Paul wrote the Galatians, “For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ” (Galatians 3:26-27).

The same apostle wrote the Romans, “Know ye not, that so many of us were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into His death. Therefore we are buried with Him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father even so we also should walk in newness of life” (Romans 6: 3-4).

Water baptism signifies the commemorative reference to the burial and resurrection of Christ. Jesus died, was buried, arose again and will return. Baptism also expresses in picture the believer’s death to sin, and resurrection to newness of life. Christian denominations differ widely on their teachings about baptism. Some believe baptism accomplishes the washing away of sin. Others consider baptism a form of exorcism from evil spirits. Still others teach that baptism is an important step of obedience in the believer’s life. Baptism is ”a rite of washing with water as a sign of religious purification and consecration. It signified purity or cleansing from sin and devotion to God (<http://www.lifehouse.org>).

The Baptist believe in the complete immersion of the body in the water while the other says that moistening the forehead is acceptable and this moistening of forehead by sprinkling water is practiced by catholic denomination of Christians.

The Bible has written that Jesus was in the river Jordan and was completely immersed in the water by John the prophet. “And Jesus, when He had been baptized, went up immediately out of the water” (Mat 3:16).

Therefore every believer in Christ must undergo baptism and in a small village where I undertook my research, all the youths have taken Baptism, without Baptism they cannot sit in the choir it is a sanctification like the process the people of *Hao* underwent to enter into a youth dormitory.

#### **D. *Shakaza* (Marriage)**

Christians understand marriage as authorized by God, who intended men and women to live together. They believe may reflects the union between Jesus and the church (his bride) and as such should be supportive, faithful, and everlasting. The Bible in the book of Mark 10:7–9 says that in marriage the couple ‘will become one’; joined together by God in a union that no one should break. The love shared by husband and wife is believed to bring them closer to knowledge of what Christian love means, closer to God, and closer to an understanding of God's love for his creation. The Church expect couples wishing to marry to attend a series of meetings with the priest or minister for instruction. The established Christian church has always been against polygamy.

Marriage has to take place in front of witnesses and it must be at the free will of both people to be married. The couple vow to live together according to God's holy law, until parted by death. The giving and receiving of rings, which symbolize the eternal nature of the marriage, reinforces the vows (<http://www.christianmarriage.com>). Therefore wedding is a very special and important part of the life cycle for the Christians and this has a very big impact even among the Tangkhul community. In Christian marriage the couple are joined together by God in a life-long partnership.

The Bible says: “Submit to one another ... husbands must love your wives with the same love Christ showed the church. He gave up his life for her ... In the same way; husbands ought to love their wives as they love their own bodies” (Matthew 19:6).

“Give honour to marriage, and remain faithful to one another in marriage. God will surely judge people who are immoral and those who commit adultery” (Ephesians 5:21 – 28).

“Christians believe that God intends the gift of sex to take place only within the marriage partnership” (Hebrews 13:4).

“God gives some the gift of marriage, and to others he gives the gift of singleness” (1 Corinthians 7:7).

The marriage is held in the Church even for the Tangkhul Naga, the entire procedure is according to the doctrine laid down by the Christian principle, though the words and line may vary according to the administrator who administers the marriage ceremony. Any Pastor can not administer the wedding, the Pastor should be an ordained one, a certified pastor who is either Reverend or Doctorate in the theology of the Christian gospel. When there is a wedding in a small village where the Local Pastor is not ordained then the two party (the bride and the groom) will arrange someone they know to administer the marriage ceremony.

The role of the priest is very important here as the whole program will function according to the arrangement made by the priest. As mentioned before, there will be two three days of counselling of both the groom and the bride about the life, about the gospel, about the future etc. This two three days are very busy days as the whole church is cleaned and decorated. The role of the Christian Youth Society is immense important here along with the two family and relatives.

On the day of wedding, everyone dressed in their best outfit will gather at the Church, and this happen mostly in the morning around 8-10 am.

When the people had gathered, they will sing songs and the bride and the groom is seated in the stage decorated with flowers. The service begin with the leader coming forward in the stage and announcing the whole congregation about the marriage, then

he will read a Bible verse, then the whole congregation stands up and sing a song after which the leader will pray which is called opening prayer.

After the opening prayer the administrator will take over, where questions were ask infront of the whole congregation about the holy marriage, their commitment and vows to abide by the Christian law.

After that ring is exchanged and in this time close friends often sing special song for the bridegroom which is called special number. Then few witnesses will be called out and a marriage certificate is signed with the bridegroom and two witnesses from each side. After signing the certificate, the administrator will bless them once again and pray for them. After that the leader of the program took over, where time for votes of thanks are given to both the family. Each representative from both the bride and the groom will come forward and say the vote of thanks to all the people who had work hard and to all the people present.

When people come to the church, they also brought gift for the wedding which is collected at the entrance of the church by the receptionist and the volunteers who are invariably the Christian Youth Society members.

After the vote of thanks, they will all sing again a hymn and the closing prayer is spoken by the administrator. Then the people go out and gather again in one place which will be arrange and cake cutting ceremony is taken up here, where they cut the cake and shared to everyone. After that a lavish lunch will follow, where all the people gathered will eat the lunch.

In the second half of the session, it is a procession from the bride's house to the groom's house. Where all the gift are displayed in the compound of the groom's place and the gift that is from the bride's side are also brought and displayed, this shows the richness of the family and the circle they have.

In the evening, especially the youth will sit in bonfire and it will be a merry making time by singing and dancing and getting to know each other. Unlike the days when people were not Christian where drinks of rice wine and rice beer were served, it is now

strictly prohibited, people who come to such gathering after drinking are look down, are seen as morales character, and he or she will become the talk of the village and also the Christian Youth Society of the village who volunteer in all this activities still look into any untoward incidents and strict actions are taken if necessary. The social gathering as they called will end around 10 to 12 where the Pastor of the village or any village elders will pray and end the program.

### **E. *Kathi* (Death)**

Inline with the Christian believes and practices, the Tangkhul Naga bury the dead body and perform the necessary ritual before burying the dead body. When a person die, the Church Local Pastor is informed who will then informed the Chawkidar (Care Taker) of the Church to ring the bell. The bell of the Church rings according to the age of the deceased. If the person who die is 80 years, the Chawkidar will ring the bell by striking at the bell 80 times in rhythmic way, but if the deceased is an infant who is below 1 year then the striking of the bell is very fast and number of striking at the bell does not count. So the number of ringing at the bell signifies the age which a person expire. Then the whole villagers gather to mourn with the family, where family, relative in the distant are also informed.

Since there is no readymade coffin, the people who are good at carpentry work will measure the approximate length and breadth and a wooden coffin is made. If the dead is in the morning, it is usually buried by evening, the concept is that the longer you keep watching and crying at the dead body, the more harder to say good bye so they try to bury early unless there is some special reason or waiting for near and dear ones ([www.christiandeath.com](http://www.christiandeath.com)).

After the coffin is made there will be a short service where the pastor will pray for the deceased soul and the family that has been left behind. After the prayer time is given for family, friends, relative and anyone who would like to say farewell word also the congregation is ask to forgive all the wrong thing done by the deceased so that the deceased can go to heaven in peace. A hymn will be sung and the closing prayer will be said after which the dead body is carried to the grave.

**Funeral Prayer**

Creator and Sustainers of our life,  
Today we mourn at the demise of our beloved.  
We know that you sent him into this world with a purpose  
and now you have taken him again.  
We commit his soul into your mighty hand  
Forgive him if any wrong thing he has done  
And accept him into your loving arm  
At this time we also pray for the family  
Give them courage and strength and comfort them  
May we always trust in you oh Lord  
Help us once again to strengthen our relation with you,  
for we know you are the creator  
We commit this prayer in the name of our Lord and saviour Jesus Christ. Amen

Every village has crematorium place which is called *Chikhur* which means cemetery. The dead body will be carried there where some of the villagers will already be there after digging the grave, then they will hold one last prayer at the grave and say goodbye. On the way to the grave the hymns will be sung and even after reaching the grave they will sing and pray. The role of the Local Pastor is utmost important here all the service order and arrangement in singing and praying are led by the pastor.

After the burial, the people come back home, there is nothing much of a rule as to do this or that unlike the times of the yore. For a week or so, the family is comforted by the Christian Youth Society by going to the deceased family every evening and singing hymns and comforting them, it is expected that the Local Pastor do visit the family time to time for a week or so to comfort the family and also to pray for the family. Then slowly normal life returns to the family and they live on once again. Christians believe in an afterlife and that belief in Jesus assures forgiveness of sins and assurance of heaven. Death is therefore not something to fear because it is not the end. (<http://christianity.about.com>) The Bible is read, because it talks about heaven. Jesus said, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies." (John chapter 11 verse 26)

## LIFE AFTER DEATH

The people of Tangkhul believe in life after death since time immemorial. Before converting to Christianity, if an individual die their soul goes to another world called *Kazeiram* which has already been describe in the chapter of pre-Christian era, but this concept seems to be similar even after they converted to Christianity, somewhere there is similarity that human have soul and this is not something that the people of Tangkhul have modified after converting to Christianity rather the Christian faith also believe in the another world where all believers will gather called *Kazingram* (Heaven).

The Christian doctrine taught the people of Tangkhul that there is a heaven for all the chosen one, for all the believers and the foundation of this is the belief that Jesus himself did not stay dead, but was raised to life after three days in the tomb and this assurance about the life after dead is given in the Bible as:

Before he died, Jesus claimed of himself, “I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die like everyone else, will live again” (John 11:25).

This are the words spoken by Jesus before he was crucified and this is still very relevant to all the believers of the Christian faith, it is in this verses that people cling on to, the people of Tangkhul are not an exception to this, infact it is at the centre of their belief that they will all rise again, the dead, the living will all rise one day and transform into a holy body is all that they belief and wait upon. The pastor and many believers among the people said that this was demonstrated by the Jesus himself, he was crucified yet he liveth again on the third day which was predicted by Jesus himself before he was crucified. On the third day when they went to the tomb, they found the tomb empty and it is clearly written in the Bible:

“He isn't here! He has been raised from the dead, just as he said would happen” (Matthew 28:6).

It is now the faith and wait of all the believers of this world and this find an echo in the small hills of Tangkhul, where people wait on and tries to do just, trying to live a good holy life meditating, going to Church, praying with the believers, studying Bible, trying to be honest, loving and caring for all the people known or unknown. The people of

Tangkhul are now on the wait for the second coming of the Jesus as he had promise before he left this world and they said that it is a promise to come true any time, no one knows when but they believe that it can be anytime, according to them it is written in the Bible that no one knows the timing except the father:

“No one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father” (Matthew 24:36).

The concept of going to heaven is one happy wait as it is written in the Bible:

“God has given us the privilege of being born again. Now we live with a wonderful expectation ... for God has reserved a priceless inheritance for his children. It is kept in heaven for you, pure and undefiled, beyond the reach of change and decay” (1 Peter 1:3-4).

But when they are ask about how will a heaven be like, there are different ways to explain and many people says many happy different thing about the heaven with no clear and concrete answer but it is going to be one happy land, those who are close to reading Bible and specially the pastor or the theologians among the Tangkhul said that in the book of Revelation, heaven is described in many ways. It tells them that in heaven there will be no night, no pain, death or crying. Jesus told his disciples that he was going to prepare a place for them describing it as rooms in his father's house and they quote the Bible verse as:

“God himself will be with them, he will remove all of their sorrows, and there will be no more death, or sorrow, or crying or pain” (Revelation 21:3-4).

“Our earthly bodies, which die and decay, will be different when they are resurrected, for they will never die. They are weak now, but when they are raised they will be full of power. They are natural, human bodies now, but when they are raised they will be spiritual bodies” (1 Corinthians 15:42-44).

### **God’s Judgement**

The people of Tangkhul are now Christians and believe in the Heaven but this heaven is not for all the Christians, the people believe that only those who are pure, holy and true

will go to heaven, it is for this that the people struggle to live a true life, a life that was shown by Jesus and they all struggle for this. They believe that everybody, dead or alive will be judge by God when they all gather in Heaven before the God who is the Father. It is believed that God maintains a record for every individual, all the Christians and God will open that book and see what one has done when they were living in this world, and this is refered in the Bible verse that is written:

“I saw the dead, both great and small, standing before God's throne...And the books were opened, including the Book of Life. The dead were judged according to what they had done” (Revelation 20:12-13).

“God's judgement is right. ... God is just. ... He will pay back trouble to those who trouble you and give relief to you who are troubled ... He will punish those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. ... They will be shut out from the presence of the Lor” (2 Thessalonians 1 5-9).

So every Christians believe that everyone will be judged by God after they die. Most Christians believe that after death you go to heaven or hell. Heaven is eternal life in the presence of God, in the perfect new creation where there is no sadness or suffering. Hell is being cut off from the life of God for ever. Christians believe that God is just and fair. When people do wrong, the people believe they have the chance to repent and be forgiven by God, or to face God's punishment after they die (<http://www.ucg.org>).

Words used to describe God's forgiveness are 'salvation' (being saved or rescued by faith in Jesus) and 'redemption' (the idea of wrongdoing being forgiven or 'paid for' by Jesus' death on the cross). Christians want to live by the teachings of Jesus and do what is right as a response to God's gift of forgiveness and this is the struggle of every Tangkhul Christians.