

THAT THEY MAY BE ONE:
HISTORICAL ACCOUNT AND THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATION OF KWS¹

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Holy Father, may they be one as we are one...
I pray also that all of them may be one, just as you are in me and I am in you.
May they also be in us so that the world may believe
that you have sent me.
(John 17:11, 21)

Introduction

At the very outset, I would like to greet each and every one of you in the sweetest name of our Lord and savior Jesus Christ. Another traditional Kuki greeting: “Nadamu hinaimo?” I feel myself privileged to stand among you scholars and future leaders of our nation and churches in this critical juncture as our nation is standing at the crossroad, with nowhere to turn to as all roads seemed a dead-end. Like Mordecai’s admonition to the young and inexperienced queen of Medo-Persia, “For Such a Time as these ...”, perhaps you and my appearance here is not accidental but deliberately planned by God. Like the proverbial saying “*Belke Ui vangphat*”, I am here due to friends who could not come here. Perhaps, as inexperienced and young in age like Queen Esther, you and I are called to do something difficult. However, let us remind ourselves the more difficult the task, the greater the reward too. The God we worship is the God who has a preferential treatment of the poor, weak, oppressed and marginalized.

May I take this opportunity to congratulate the 50th year of the foundation of KSO Shillong. The student community in Shillong was responsible in initiating the first KWS. Even now, students in other cities initiate such spiritual activities except in some places like Happy Valley, Itanagar, Aizawl, etc. Nicknamed as ‘Scotland of the East’, Shillong provided the best education available in the days of yore and has been the alma mater for many here, especially those of our elders sitting here. It is a privilege to be at the heart of a renowned educational centre which, I believe, is a pointer to the advance of KWS in the future even. Since the founding of the KWS in 1980, KWS has traveled through thick and thin and has come of age. It therefore needs a proper study that will enrich and deepen the KWS and continue to be of relevance to the church and the society.

The purpose of this paper is two-fold as the title indicates, both historical and theological. Each of the topics could be a full paper and I wonder whether I will be able to give justice to the two broad topics laid before me. Therefore, this paper will in no way be an exhaustive one but will select some issues which I feel are pertinent to initiate us for further discussion and deliberations.

Acknowledgement: This paper is the outcome of ideas and help I got from people like Rev. Paothang Haokip, Mr Ngamkhothang @ Thangboi Haokip, Rev. Dr.J. Lamboi Haokip, etc.

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Historical Account:

The history of Christianity among the Kukis may be divided into three phases: The Pioneering Period; Division and Its factors; and Period of Ecumenism.

1. The Pioneering Period

Christianity came to Manipur during the later part of the nineteenth century. It was brought to the Kuki people of Manipur by two separate mission, The Arthington Aborigenes Mission, later succeeded by American Baptist Mission (ABM) through William Pettigrew in the North in 1896, and the independent Welsh Mission called the Indo-Burma Thadou-Kuki Pioneer Mission (IBTKPM), later changed to North-East India General Mission (NEIGM), and recently changed to Evangelical Congregational Church of India (ECCI), through Watkin R. Roberts in the Southern part of Manipur in 1910. Christianity came to the Kukis as a dynamic force that spread all over the regions with the result that almost all the people had become Christians in less than a century. Churches and Christian communities are established and associations and conventions were formed as a result of their mission work.

2. Division and Its Factors

The Christianity that the Kukis were exposed to was a divided Christianity, divided in doctrines, beliefs and practices. Although the pioneers were from the American Baptist Mission in the North and the Independent Welsh Mission in the South, different denominational bodies appeared in course of time where almost all the World's denominations can be found among these thinly populated tribes. How and why these happened in a small community like ours?

The division in the early period of the Churches could be attributed to at least four factors. The first and foremost and also the most important cause of division is none other than the coming of Western Missionaries who belong to different denominations. This has been supported by some writers like Sebastian Karotempral³ and F.S. Downs.⁴ Both of them are unanimous that the present division of the Church was caused neither by the people themselves nor by their choice but the impact of the divided Christianity brought from the west. This is also quite true for the cause of division among the Kuki Churches at least in the early period. The majority of the missionaries belong to the denominations they do because their parents did. The Kukis belong to their own denominations largely because of agreements drawn up among the denominational

³ Sebastian Karotempral is more specific in his observation of the divided tribal when he says: "The Christianity that the tribals were exposed to was a very divided Christianity, divided in doctrine, history, catechism, ethical standards and emotional attitudes. Historical rivalries that were prevalent in Europe and America were transferred to a simple tribal society that had little historical acquaintance or judgement or judiciousness."(Sebastian Karotempral, "The Impact of Christianity on the Tribes of North East India", *Impact of Christianity on North East India*, ed. J. Puthenpurakal (Shillong:Vendrame Institue Publications, 1996), 43.

⁴ F.S. Downs, while referring to the Church Union Movement among the Churches in North-East India observes: "It is, I believe, impossible to say that the present divisions of the Church in North-East India arise out of theological differences, nor do I think we will find that doctrine is the main stumbling block to Church union. We belong to our present denominations due to the accidents of history and birth. This is certainly true of the Indian Christians among us; It is also true of the majority of the missionaries. We are not what we are because we have made an objective choice after a careful examination of the doctrines of the various denominations." (F.S. Downs, *Church Union: Theological & Non-Theological Factors* (The Church Union Committee of the NEICC, 1965), 1.

missionary societies. We have noted about the coming of American Baptist Missionaries in the North which makes the converts into faithful Baptists, and the Independent Welsh Mission in the south making the converts loyal Presbyterians or Congregationalists. Thus according to Downs, they are what they are by a series of historical accidents, by virtue of decisions not made by the Christians themselves but by missionaries and mission societies sitting around tables with maps and red pencils demarcating comity areas.⁵ This fact has so far been undermined by the Kuki Christians as they became more loyal to their own denominations as if they became one by choice. The tendency continues till now. While this was an outside factor, the rest were from the people themselves. Language controversy and property was believed to be the main cause of division from which at least two divisions were affected.⁶ This was followed by clanism which played a vital role. Churches were founded in clan-wise, some openly like the Baptists in the north, but some clandestinely such as the Congregationalists in the south.⁷ This, according to Thongkhohal Haokip, was in response to the evangelical movement in which churches have Evangelical as their prefix.⁸

3. *Period of Ecumenism*

A Note about Ecumenism - The term "Ecumenism" is the noun form of the adjective "ecumenical". Though one word in English, it is a combination of two Greek words, "Oikos"⁹ and "Menos". The former means 'a house', and the latter means 'to live'.¹⁰ Thus, it means to live in a house. It also means "inhabited earth"¹¹ or "the whole world".¹² The world is taken

⁵ Downs, *Church Union: Theological & Non-Theological Factors*, 2.

⁶ The first problem regarding language was started in the early 1965 when the use of language which had so far been known as 'Thadou' was disputed for the first time. As mentioned above, the matter became so serious and went beyond settlement that some sections of the convention in the North-East started to revive the old NEKBAM and reaffiliated by MBC-CBCNEI in 1967. Another problem happened in connection with the Bible translation. What followed was intense argument, misunderstandings and protests all over extending to other states like Assam and Nagaland, and worst of all, it led to the second major division of the Church among the Kukis.

⁷ Churches were founded on clan lines. Eg., among the Baptists in the North, we have the GBA for Gangtes, VBA for Vaipheis, TBA for Thadous, Ch.B.A. for Chongthus and Touthangs, DOUNGELS, CBA for Tedim Chins, etc. even KBC was called by some as Haokips though in fact many different clans constitutes the convention with Haokips as little majority. The KCC is known by others as that of the Lunkims, Khongsais and its allied clans. In the South, most of the mainline Churches are also based on clan wise though the name of the presbytery or association were not revealing as others. Within the ECCI, the ECA for the Thadou Kukis, the ESC for Gangtes, SEMACA for Anals, ECM for Baites, ECC for Paites, etc. Similarly, within the Presbyterian Churches, the Khuga Sadar Presbytery for Vaipheis, MEP and MGP for the Zous, the Tuithaphai Presbytery for Lushai Mizos, the Muollhangphai Presbytery for the Thadou Kukis, etc. The Hmars of the former IBPM have the ICI and EFCI, while Simtes the NTBCA, etc.

⁸ Thongkhohal Haokip, "Kuki Churches Unification Movements", Kuki Research Forum, Shillong, 2011, 7.

⁹ The word "oikos", shares a common root word with economy, ecology and ecumenism. Economy began as the study of the management of a household's financial resources; ecology - study of the management of a household's physical resources; and ecumenism - study of the management of a household's moral, ethical and spiritual resources amidst a plurality of values. (Mike Ellerbrock, *Roots of Economics, Ecology and Ecumenism: Foundations of the Land-Grant Household*(Virginia Agricultural Experiment Station Information Series 98, 1998, accessed 1 February).

¹⁰ Konrad Raiser, "Oikumene," in *Dictionary of the Ecumenical Movement*, ed. Jose Miguez Bonino Nicholas Lossky, et. al. (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 2002), 840-841.

¹¹ T.V. Philip, *Ecumenism in Asia* (Delhi: ISPCK & CSS, 1994), 23.

¹² Raiser, "Oikumene," 840-841.

metaphorically as a house in which all creation live in harmonious peaceful co-existence. Thus, in its traditional sense it would refer to that movement or group of Christians who have common goal of overcoming division within the Church of Christ and restore its unity as a universal people of Christ.

(a) Within the Established Churches - Following the division that took place there had been numerous efforts for church unity in the formation of various church organizations and interdenominational fellowships such as KBC, KCC, KCBU/EIBU/CEBC, KCECU, and KCLF. These have encouraged Christian Fellowship and cooperation in matters of common interest.¹³ After working for some years together in such organisations particularly in the KCLF, some of the leaders deeply felt the need for the Churches to come together into an Organic Union.¹⁴ However, in spite of the best efforts and best intentions put into by the negotiating churches, it did not see the light of the day for various factors¹⁵. Thus, the above survey reveals the failed attempts for unity (or partial success at best) among the Kuki Christians in Manipur and elsewhere which therefore bring us to our main focus, the origin and growth of the Kuki Worship Service.

(b) Outside of the Established Churches: The Emergence of KWS

While ecumenical efforts had been going in the home states, there was a similar kind of effort outside the established churches of the Kuki diaspora, particularly in the formation of an ecumenical organization commonly called the Kuki Worship Service in the early eighties. Though the motive for forming such a fellowship may not be ecumenical, the result was quite ecumenical. It was a unity model unexplored hitherto, but was a success. Perhaps we should attribute it to the mighty works of God who had been struggling for unity and peace. Extensive work on the historical account has been done by Mr Thangboi Haokip in his BD thesis.¹⁶ Here, I present a brief summary of the historical account of KWS according to period-wise chronology.

¹³ For further details see Thongkholal Haokip, “Kuki Churches Unification Movements”, 8ff.

¹⁴ To explore such possibilities for union, a sub-committee was appointed. Since 1994 there had been four Church Leaders Consultations, Seminars and one Conference was conducted. In 1998 the Plan of Union and the Draft Constitution was formulated and circulated for study and response. At first, there was a possibility for the unity effort to be successful as the plan and draft were said to be approved. Yet this acceptance could not lead to Union negotiations.

¹⁵ It was thought that differences on doctrines such as those differences between the Evangelicals and the Ecumenical were the main stumbling block towards Church Unity. It might have happened to be so elsewhere. But in the case of the Kuki people, though conservatism plays a part, the real problems were non-theological factors rather than the theological factors. This non-theological factors that still hinders the progress of the on-going search for Church unity are the clan differences, the missionaries and the indigenous brand of communalism, etc. which are related to each other. Others include property and possession, considered to be a threat by many Church leaders, lack of sincerity and commitment on the part of the leaders and also lack of mass awareness on the need and importance of Church division.

¹⁶ Thangboi’s thesis is entitled: “The Role of Kuki Worship Service towards the Unity and Transformation of the Kukis in Diaspora.” Submitted to the Faculty of Bishop’s College in partial fulfillment of Bachelor of Divinity, 2010. The thesis is an important work insofar as it is a significant contribution to the history of life and growth of the KWS. It presents a detailed discussion on the historical account as well as the theological argument of a theology of humanity that is hoped to sustain and foster the growth of KWS. It is a mine of authentic information and will serve

The First Period – Founding of KWSS (1980-1986)

As the old adage goes, ‘necessity is the mother of invention’, the Kuki worship service began with a need. It was the spiritual and social need that the Kuki diaspora felt in places they call it ‘home away from home’. For Thangboi, “It is due to their awareness of being one conglomerate group and their subsequent quest to worship together in their own dialect, in the midst of other larger communities.”¹⁷ Also, it was the love of God and love for fellow Kukis that enable the Kuki students to start such a fellowship first in Shillong on September 21, 1980. Started as the Kuki Students Worship Service (KSWS), the name was changed to Kuki Worship Service (KWS) in 1982 ‘in order to include family members in the worship service and to facilitate their active participation.’¹⁸ After years of planning for a church plot, they could erect a church building in 2003 and were also the first unit to have a building of its own. It was a humble beginning and the founders might not have an iota of idea as to how it will grow into such as of now. However, there was no other formation of KWS units in different place whatsoever.

The Second Period - Regress & Dormant Period (1987-1996)

After a lull for more than ten years, the second unit to start KWS after Shillong was Delhi, the nation’s capital in 1992. As with Shillong, Kuki students, under the guidance of some officers who were the advisors, entrusted the Moral and Religion Secretary for the worship matter and thus established the KWS Delhi with four objectives.¹⁹ KWS Delhi is one of the few units who have been actively engaged in many activities and projects since its formation. One of the priority of KWSD is to have their own place of worship which has been the costliest project.

The Third Period - Growth and Stability (1997-2011) –The decade has been a very significant event in the history of the KWS as it spurred the growth and significance of the KWS units every where more than ever and is characterized by three events - Khanglai 2000, the growth of more units, and the formation of AIKWSCC vis-à-vis the meeting between AIKWSCC and the KCLF.

(i) KHANGLAI 2000: Khanglai 2000 conference was the first of its kind and therefore a trendsetter. It was organised at the initiative of Kuki Worship Service Delhi with the theme “Come let us rebuild” (Neh.2:17), from 26-30 October 2000 at Immanuel Theological Seminary, Mehrauli, New Delhi. The main speaker was Rev. Steve Dixon from UK. The aim of the conference was to bring together Kuki youths from the various units of the Kuki worship

as a source book for any interested individual on the subject. For details such as dates, persons, etc., see Thangboi’s write-up. (For your information, I am told that it will also come in book form soon.)

¹⁷ Thangboi, “The Role of Kuki Worship Service”, 25.

¹⁸ Thangboi, “The Role of Kuki Worship Service”, 26.

¹⁹ The four objectives are: (i) To administer the spiritual needs of its members in the context of minority community living in the midst of diverse cultures - secular as well as religious.(ii) To promote the spiritual well being and communitarian unity; to protect the fraternal integrity of its members and to preserve the interdenominational character of the fellowship. (iii) To foster learning community and as a thinking fellowship to engage in the social issues and concerns that affect its members and the society as a whole; (iv) To be a fellowship that is engaged in proclaiming the Gospel of Jesus Christ and spreading his message of salvation, freedom and eternal. (Lutngam Singson, “KWSD in the last ten years” (*Ebenezer: Decade Celebration Souvenir 1992-9002*)7 and 8.) quoted by Thangboi, “The Role of Kuki Worship Service”, 28-29.

Services, to strengthen their spiritual lives and expand their awareness on the socio-economic and political condition of the Kuki Society.²⁰ For Thangboi, the first Khanglai was held from 26-30 October 2002 which seems to contradict the year of the conference.²¹ Whatever it may be, many youths representing different units participated at the conference and were blessed. Unfortunately there is no written record of the proceedings and detailed report on this important event. Clarification must be made to the term “Khanglai” as not in the sense of ‘youths’ but as a brand name for spiritual conferences organised by KWS.²²

Since then, there has been a dramatic growth of holding Khanglai in units that celebrates their ten years of its existence as a community of believers such as in Guwahati in October 2008, Bangalore and Hyderabad in January and October of 2009 respectively.

(ii) Decadal Celebration of KWS Delhi & Meeting between AIKWS and Kuki Church Leaders:

Towards the end of November, the KWS Delhi celebrated 10 years of God’s abiding grace from 23rd – 24th November 2002 with “**EBENEZER – Thus far the Lord has helped us**” I Samuel 7:12 as its theme. As part of the Decade Celebration program, a four day intensive training on various aspects of Christian Leadership and Church Management was organized from 18th – 22nd November 2002 at EFICOR’s Conference Hall for Kuki Christian leaders from Manipur, and Assam. About 15 Kuki Christian leaders representing KCLF, KBC, KCC, ECA, TBA, KBA and KNT attended the training and the decade celebration program as well.²³ Many of the KWS Units also participated. The significance of this celebration was two-fold: the formation of an all India level organization to oversee the various KWS Units, and the meeting between Christian leaders from home states and AIKWSCC including representatives of the various KWS units.

(a) All India Kuki Worship Service Co-Ordination Committee (AIKWSCC): Following the growth and formation of various units, it was felt to have an All India level body to nurture and care that led to the formation of a very important body known as the All India Kuki Worship Service Coordination Committee (AIKWSCC) in 2002. The Committee facilitates consultations, leadership seminars, closer interactions and exchange of ideas in developing joint projects, common constitution, motto and logo for all the Units. Moreover, the task of having better relationship with the parent churches fall on the AIKWSCC has coordinated with Kuki Christian Leaders Fellowship (KCLF) in providing Chaplains and Pastors for various KWS Units and also in dealing with issues and concerns raised by parent churches. A constitution was drafted in 2005 and was approved with minor changes. The preamble of the Constitution²⁴ reads:

²⁰ Brochure of the Khanglai 2000 in ms word made available to me by Rev. Paothang by soft copy.

²¹ Thangboi, “The Role of Kuki Worship Service”, 25.

²² As explained by Rev. Paothang, General Secretary of AIKWSCC through phone on 23rd September, 2011.

²³ Report of the KWS Delhi Decade Celebration and Minutes of the KWS Units Representative Meeting held at EFICOR’s Conference Hall, New Delhi on 24th November 2002.

²⁴ The draft of the Constitution of AIKWSCC prepared untiringly for the SPIRITUAL and WHOLISITIC development and growth of all the members of our member Units; To transform EACH individual member into a blessing for the family, for the Church and for the community in particular and presented by Rev J. Lamboi Haokip and Mr Lunzalen Khongsai on 14 October 2005.

Having felt the need for all Kuki Worship Services to come together as ONE in the name of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, and in the true spirit of the brotherhood / sisterhood: having done the preliminary works towards this end through the initiative of our dedicated leaders (since 2000) and with lots of prayer; we, the KUKI WORSHIP SERVICE located in different cities of India, having given our whole hearted commitment, joined our hearts and minds together under the ALL INDIA KUKI WORSHIP SERVICE CO-ORDINATION COMMITTEE, and affirm and dedicate ourselves to the following visions.²⁵

(b) Meeting Between KWS Leaders and Kuki Christian Leaders:

One important outcome of the meeting between both parties was - “Except KWS, nobody should establish other Church/Fellowship in cities outside Manipur, Nagaland and Assam”.²⁶ However, no follow-up action on some erring organizations was taken nor the church to which the erring parties accounted for. What is the value of such a resolution when the church concerned does not keep it?

(iii) Growth of more units: The decade experienced the fastest growth ever with the establishment of KWS units in different places. It took another five more years to establish KWS units which began to form one after another. Accordingly, the third unit was formed at KWS Happy Valley (Shillong) in 1997 whose members are mostly military pensioners’ family living in their own homes, students and other workers.²⁷ This was immediately followed by another important unit of Guwahati in 1998, also initiated by Kuki students. In Bangalore the issue of forming a KWS unit was initiated by theologians (or theological students?) and (secular) students. However, one of the founding leaders later became one of the staunch critic and anti-KWS who also began to form his own fellowship to the detriment of the united Kuki community. The same year saw the formation of KWS unit at Hyderabad in 1999. in Kolkota (2001); Pune (2003); Chennai (2008); Itanagar (2008); Mumbai & Silchar (2009); Aizawl 2010; Pondicherry in 2011. Besides these units in India, new units began to be initiated even outside India such as Kuala Lumpur (Malaysia) in 2005; London in 2007; Oklahama (USA) in the name of Kuki Community Church (2010); Yangon (formerly Rangoon) and Dhaka (Bangladesh) 2011. Due to limitation of time and space, I do not elaborate on nature of their formations, although important as they are.

Theological Foundation

I must admit that I am not a theologian but a historian (in the sense of not being a systematic theologian). Systematic theologians are the ones to formulate theological proposals and the task of historian is to present what actually happened in the past.

²⁵ The vision of the AIKWSCC is - To work and to all others around us; To worship God with Spirit and Truth, Serve Him with humility and to glorify Him with majesty, with the help and power of the HOLY SPIRIT; To harness our resources for strengthening all the KWS Units to be effective agents in extension of the Kingdom of God.

²⁶ Minutes of a dialogue between KWS-unit representatives and delegates of Kuki Christian Leaders Fellowship (KCLF) held at EFICOR’s Conference Hall, New Delhi on 24th November 2002.

²⁷ Thangboi, “The Role of Kuki Worship Service”, 30.

In the midst of the significance and popularity of KWS, it has not been without challenge whatsoever. The nature of KWS as a church has been questioned by some self-serving and vested interested groups whose aims are not so much as to glorify God through the united fellowship of its members but to fill their empty belly or make profit out of their so-called fellowships or church in contradistinction to the KWS. They claim to know the truth and regarded that truth as the ultimate truth only possessed by them and none others. If that has been out in the open, could there be secret proposals and schemes of some church organizations in the home states to establish one's own denomination in the cities where KWS ministry is at work. If such schemes work out, it will be to the detriment of all and the unity that was hardly earned throughout these years will be lost which should be a matter of concern for one and all.

The theological foundation for the Christian Church in general and the KWS in particular are as follows:

1. Triune God as the basis of our Unity – Christian unity takes its origin from the trinity. The unity of the father, the son and the Holy Spirit draws everyone into a real communion. For Hooft, “The love of God the father and the son in unity of the Holy Spirit is the source and goal of the unity which the triune God wills for all people and creation.”²⁸ Unity among Christians is the reflection of the unity of the three divine persons. Christian unity is based on the unity that exists in the Trinity. This is definitely expressed in the prayer of Jesus. Thus, the unity of Christians must be patterned on the oneness of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

2. The Church:

(a) Etymology - Here I reproduced Rev. Dino's definition of the Church. “The word "church" in the English Bible is translated from the term *ekklesia*. This word is the Greek words *kaleo* (to call), with the prefix *ek* (out). Thus, the word means "the called out ones." However, the English word "church" does not come from *ekklesia* but from the word *kuriakon*, which means "dedicated to the Lord." It was also used as a synonym for the word *synagogue*, which also means to "come together," i.e. a gathering. It biblically always refers to a local group of believers meeting in a particular geographical location. In the New Testament the word "*ekklesia*" is normally used to refer to an assembly of believers. In this sense KWS is a church as a body of Christians worshipping in a particular location, constituting one congregation.”²⁹

(ii) Marks of the Church – The marks of the Church is one, holy, Catholic Church³⁰ – Since the beginning of the New Testament Church, there arose many heretical teachings about the Church and its ministries, such as Arianism, Montanism, Marcionism, etc. These all lead to misunderstandings and conflicts and unhealthy relations between believers. The Church

²⁸ Visser't Hooft Willem, (ed.), *The New Delhi Report*, London, 1962, 116.

²⁹ Touthang, “Future Prospects of Kuki Worship Service”, Paper presented at the Decade celebration-cum-Khanglai 2009, Bangalore from 2.

³⁰ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Four_Marks_of_the_Church

responded in many ways, one of which is development of creed, commonly known as “The Nicene Creed”³¹. Accordingly, the Church is **one, holy, catholic and apostolic**.

- (a) **One** - The Church of the apostles was definitely one: "There is one body and one spirit," Paul wrote, "just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of us all" (Eph. 4:4-5). The oneness in Christ has been actualized in the KWS.
- (b) **Holy** - The word holy means *set apart for a special purpose by and for God*. We do not mean that all of its members have ceased to be sinners and have themselves become all-holy. On the contrary, the Church from the beginning, on her human side, has been composed of sinners: "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners" (1 Tim. 1:15). The Church was founded for no other reason than to continue Christ's redemptive and sanctifying work with them in the world. The holiness of the Church, of which the creed properly speaks, has always had reference to her divine Founder and to what the Church was founded by him with the power and authority to do, not with the condition of her members. This aspect has been one of the most important mission in the ministry of KWS in quipping the saints for God and His ministry.
- (c) **Catholic** - The word catholic comes from the Greek words *kat' holos*, literally meaning "according to the whole," or in actual use, worldwide or universal. The Catholicity of the Church in any case resides as much in the fact that the Church is for everybody at all times as it does in the fact that it was indeed destined to spread everywhere throughout the whole world. Though the name appears to be exclusive, KWS has no policy for discrimination of others joining its fellowship. Rather, there exists an environment of openness, wherein others feel welcome and accepted and in return be enriched by their presence and participation.³²
- (d) **Apostolic** – We understand *apostolic* to mean that there is continuity in the church's teachings from the apostles throughout history, not just in the first century. KWS, like any other church, are a continuation of the teaching of Christ and his apostles down through the centuries.

³¹ The text of the Nicene Creed reads: “We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all that is, seen and unseen. We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, light from light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, of one Being with the Father; through him all things were made. For us and for our salvation he came down from heaven, was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary and became truly human. For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate; he suffered death and was buried. On the third day he rose again in accordance with the Scriptures; he ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and his kingdom will have no end. We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father [and the Son], who with the Father and the Son is worshiped and glorified, who has spoken through the prophets. We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church. We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins. We look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen.” (<http://www.creeds.net/ancient/nicene.htm>)

³² Touthang, “Future Prospects of Kuki Worship Service”, 3.

3. Meaning and Purpose of the Church - The New Delhi Statement seems to fit the reasons for the existence of KWS as a Church:

We believe that the unity which is both God's will and his gift to his church is being made visible as all in each place who are baptized into Jesus Christ and confess him as Lord and Saviour are brought by the Holy Spirit into one fully committed fellowship, holding the one apostolic faith, preaching the one Gospel, breaking the one bread, joining in common prayer, and having a corporate life reaching out in witness and service to all and who at the same time are united with the whole Christian fellowship in all places and all ages in such a way that the ministry and members are accepted by all, and that all can act and speak together as occasion requires for the tasks to which God calls his people.³³

4. Model - Unity in Diversity – The reason for the failure of church unity among the Kukis in the home states perhaps was due to their attempt for an organic model of unity. Though it was quite successful in the pre-independence era where colonialism vis-avis-Indian nationalism was the driving force at that time to form the Church of South India and Church of North India, the same may not apply to the Kuki situation today. In the absence of any other better alternative models, the unity in diversity seems to be the best as of now which strikes chord with the KWS which is also an important factor for its success. In KWS, one does not lose one's denominational identity nor assert one's identity in the family which is based on mutual respect.

Conclusion:

Having such a firm foundation there is no going back. With God on our side, nothing can stop us. God is on the march and so are we. With God on our side we have none to fear. Let us accept this admonition from the writer of Hebrews: *“Therefore since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight and the sin that clings so closely, and let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of our faith...”* (Heb.12:1-2a). Let me conclude with a testimony of an unknown monk. *“When I was a young man, I wanted to change the world. I found it was difficult to change the world, so I tried to change my nation. When I found I couldn't change the nation, I began to focus on my town. I couldn't change the town and as an older man, I tried to change my family. Now, as an old man, I realize the only thing I can change is myself, and suddenly I realize that if long ago I had changed myself, I could have made an impact on my family. My family and I could have made an impact on our town. Their impact could have changed the nation and I could indeed have changed the world.”* You must be the change you want to see in the world. (M.K. Gandhi).

³³ Willem, (ed.), *The New Delhi Report*, 116.