

Christian Conference of Asia

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To:

CCA Member Churches and Councils
Ecumenical Partners

Appeal for Prayers and Solidarity with Victims of Floods in Kerala

The State of Kerala in India is currently experiencing a devastating situation due to heavy floods, unprecedented scale of torrential rains, overflowing of rivers and lakes, release of dam waters and a series of massive landslides. Heavy landslides have made the situation graver as thousands have lost their homes. Hundreds have been killed; hundreds of thousands have been displaced.

The Christian Conference of Asia (CCA) offers condolences to the families of all those who have lost their lives, and expresses solidarity with the affected people experiencing extensive damage in their lives due to the disaster. The CCA urges all its member churches, as well as churches and ecumenical organisations around the world to pray for the affected people and communities in Kerala, and come forward to express solidarity and respond urgently to this humanitarian crisis.

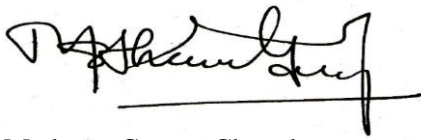
Declared as the most devastating floods since 1924, the people of Kerala have never faced such a terrifying deluge before. Thousands of people are rendered homeless as houses and roads have collapsed due to the floods and landslides. It was reported that 35 of the 36 dams in the State have been forced open, releasing nearly 700,000 litres of water per second. While the official death toll is close to 400 presently, the figures are still rising; many continue to be missing. More than a million people have been evacuated or rescued from their homes and a large number of people have left their homes voluntarily to take shelter elsewhere in homes of friends, relatives and well-wishers. More than 5,645 relief camps have been set up during the past five days. Rescue operations have been intensified amid frantic calls for help from hundreds of stranded citizens. Hundreds of fishermen in their own boats, Air Force in helicopters and the Navy and Coast Guard in special boats are involved in rescue operations with the assistance of thousands of volunteers.

The rescue operations and relief support are being coordinated by the State Government through different government agencies and supported by civil society and faith based organisations in local areas. However, thousands of people are still stranded in far-flung houses in several areas. A respite in rainfall has aided the relief efforts but it will take a major effort to get all the stranded people to safe shelters. Transportation and communication systems in the State are ruined as major roads have been damaged, telephone networks are down and electricity is cut-off in many areas. The main airport in Kerala has been closed, and trains and buses offer limited services.

The devastation of Kerala is causing untold miseries to millions of people in this south Indian State, commonly known as "God's Own Country". There is an outpouring of goodwill and support from across the country and the Indian diaspora in several parts of the world. All efforts, private and governmental,

need to be stepped up to assist the affected people, especially for those who have lost everything. There is a strong urgency to reach out to more communities who are stranded and isolated in the most remote areas. Only timely intervention and assistance will help meet the needs of the affected and reduce the sufferings of the millions of Keralites. All churches in Kerala, including several CCA member churches, are now actively involved in relief operations together with other religious communities, civil society organisations and volunteers in affected areas. Church buildings, schools, colleges and hospitals of churches are now converted into temporary shelters for affected people. The impact of the devastation will remain long term. There is an urgent need to rebuild and rehabilitate the lives of the people and the communities and restore normalcy for which timely intervention and assistance are needed on a large scale.

Any assistance to support the victims of the floods through CCA member churches in Kerala will be greatly appreciated, and CCA will be able to channel designated funds received for this purpose. Your contributions to this cause may please be sent to the account of CCA.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mathews George Chunakara', written over a horizontal line.

Mathews George Chunakara
General Secretary, CCA