

**INITIATIVES AND CONTRIBUTIONS OF PRISON MINISTRY INDIA
AMIDST THE ECCLESIAL AND SOCIAL CHALLENGES
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1. Introduction

“Be a love Bomb. Let it be exploded. Not to kill but to heal the broken hearted”. The whole story of Prison Ministry India (PMI) began with the sharing of this statement by Brother Varghese Karippery and Francis Kodiyan at St Thomas Apostolic Seminary, Kottayam, Kerala, India in 1981. Jesus’ crucifixion on Calvary was a super dynamic Love Bomb explosion by which millions risen from dead. If Jesus is a Super Dynamic Love Bomb, everyone can become a dynamic love bomb, not to kill but to heal the broken-hearts. This presentation reveals how PMI volunteers become love bombs to explode and to emit rays of hope, love, compassion and life to prisoners.

2. Sitz im Leben - Indian Subcontinent

India, mother of world religions, emancipated from the British colonization in 1947, is a sovereign, socialist, secular and democratic republic with no state religion¹.

2.1 People of India

Population	1.38 billion
Literacy	72.1%
Life Expectancy Men	65.8 Men
Life Expectancy Women	68 Women
Average Age	27.5

2.2 Religions in India

Hindus	79.8%
Muslims	14.2%
Christians	2.3%
Sikh	1.7%
Buddhists	0.7%
Others	1.3%

2.3 Political Parties

Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)
Indian National Congress (INC)
Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP)
Communist Party of India (CPI)
Communist Party of India (Marxist) (CPM)
Nationlist Congress Party (NCP)
Aam Aadmi Party (AAP)
All India Trinamul Congress (TMC)

¹ India is the birthplace of many world major religions namely Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, Sikhism etc.

2.4 Indian Social Challenges

- Poverty
- Illiteracy
- Terrorism
- Casteism
- Untouchability
- Corruption
- Overpopulation
- Child Marriage

2.5 Ecclesial Background

Arrival of St Thomas the Apostle	52AD
Martyrdom of St Thomas the Apostle	72AD
Arrival of Persian Missionaries	Fourth Century
Liturgical Language	Syriac
Liturgical Family	Chaldean
Arrival of European Missionaries	16 Century
Arrival of St Francis Xavier	1548
Arrival of Protestant Missionaries	19 Century
Evangelization of Dalits and Tribals	20 Century

2.6 Catholic Church in India

Catholic Population	20 Million
Three Rites	Latin, Syro Malabar, and Syro Malankara
Dioceses	174
Apostolic Nuncio in India	Archbishop Giambattista Diquattro
CBCI President	Oswald Cardinal Gracious
Educational Institutions	37 %
Charitable Institutions	40 %

3. Indian Prisons and Prisoners

Prisoners	4,33,003	Sub Jails	732
Convicts	1,35,683	District Jails	394
Undertrials	2,93,058	Central Jails	137
Detenues	2,089	Open Jails	64
Female Prisoners	18,498	Special Jails	42
Children	1942	Women Jails	20
Foreign prisoners	6,370	Borstal Schools	20
Prisons	1412	Other Jails	3

3.1 Prison Challenges

Overcrowding	Insufficient Food and Clothing
Large Number of Undertrials	Lack of Classification and Correctional Methods
Inadequacy of Prison Staff	Inefficient Vocational Training
Lack of Health and Hygienic	

4. Prison Ministry India (PMI)

Prison Ministry India is a Catholic Spiritual Movement for the release, reformation and rehabilitation of prisoners under the justice, peace and development commission of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of India with its headquarters in Bangalore.

4.1 Origin and Development

The PMI conception took place on 8th December 1981 at the phone-cabin of St Thomas Apostolic seminary, Kottayam, Kerala, India while two seminarians, Francis Kodiyan and Varghese Karipperry, were discussing class subjects. We felt profound ideological agreement – an experience of one in heart and one in mind - on the concept that today what we need most is a love bomb, “Be a love bomb. Let it be exploded. Not to kill but to heal the broken-hearted”.

4.2 From the Eucharist to Jesus Fraternity

We shook hands and decided to be friends. Our first decision was to spend every day half an hour during siesta in the Malankara chapel in adoration of the Most Holy Eucharist. This empowered us and inspired us to begin a prayer group known as Jesus Fraternity.

4.3 From Prayer Group to the Periphery

The group prayer under the guidance Fr Mathew led us to the periphery of Kottayam city and share our love to the people in distress such as slumdwellers, beggars, orphans, cancer patients and so on.

4.4 From Periphery to Prison

One Thursday while we were retuning seminary after the visit to the old-age home of Mother Teresa sisters they noticed a board *Kottaym Sub Jail* and wanted to go inside. But we did not get permission. However, we decided to visit the prison at any cost.

4.5 From Prison to Prison Fellowship

On the way back to seminary we noticed another board – *Prison Fellowship India*. The next Thursday we visited this office and it was the Indian headquarters of the International Prison Fellowship organisation founded by Chuck Colson. Through their assistance we visited Kottayam Sub Jail and it pierced their hearts.

4.6 All Kerala Prion Pilgrimage

In 1986 summer holidays we organised an All Kerala Prison Pilgrimage covering 32 prisons in Kerala with cultural programmes. We prepared for this pilgrimage with prayer and fasting and the result was unbelievable. Many conversions took place in prisons. We received lots of divine providence experiences. Our bishops and seminary staff liked the ministry and they encouraged us.

4.7 Ecclesiastical Recognition

In 1989 Kerala Catholic Bishops Conference recognised this ministry and welcomed it under its justice, peace and development commission. Giving us an office at its headquarters they appointed me in charge of the prison ministry.

4.8 National Level Ministry

In 1994 we extended our ministry to the national level with its headquarters in Bangalore. We convened the first national convention in Bangalore and Fr Varghese Karippery was elected as the first national coordinator and took a secular name Prison Ministry India (PMI).

4.9 CBCI Recognition

On 24 August 2000 CBCI recognized Prison Ministry India under its justice, peace and development commission and Most Rev Peter Remigius, the bishop of Kottar became the first CBCI Chairman for PMI. In 2017 Most Rev Allwyn D'Silva, the auxiliary bishop of Bombay became the Chairman of PMI.

4.10 PMI Administration

PMI has 7000 volunteers and we visit more than 950 prisons 29 states and 7 union territories of India. In every state we have a state coordinator with an executive body, in every diocese we have a diocesan coordinator and nearby most of the prisons we have a PMI unit under a coordinator. In many seminaries we have PMI units mainly for prayer and fasting for the renewal of prisoners. The national coordinator under the guidance of the CBCI Chairman in the national executive body takes the major decisions.

4.11 Requirements to Become PMI Volunteer

A burning heart to regain the lost like that of the heart of Jesus and Mary and like that of the disciples on the way to Emmaus. Volunteers shall have the mind and heart like that of Mary who went to serve Elizabeth. They shall be sanctified by the precious blood of Jesus, protected by the Word of God, empowered by the most Holy Eucharist and the rosary.

5 Outreach

As Jesus went to reach out the sinners, the sick and suffering, PMI volunteers go in search of the lost sheep in prison and do innumerable services inside the prison.

5.1 Liturgical Celebrations

On every Sunday in those prisons where there are Catholics, we celebrate Holy Mass and the sacrament of reconciliation. During Lenten season in many prisons we conduct retreats and way of the cross.

5.2 Bible and Literature Distribution

PMI distributes many copies of Bible in different languages and lot of Catholic literature in different languages thanks to the generosity of many Catholics.

5.3 Festivals and Celebrations

Christmas, Easter, national festivals like Diwali, Onam, Independence Day etc are celebrated well with our brethren behind the bars by the volunteers of PMI. Lots of programs were organized inside the various types of prisons, observation and juvenile homes during these festivities. Families and children were helped in a special way, Bible stories and Christmas play and cultural programs were enacted, food, prizes and gifts were distributed.

5.4 Women's Day Celebrations

In order to mark the women's day with honour, it was celebrated in various prisons of our country with great love and joy. We celebrate this day with prayer services, cultural program, talk on women and their service, games and prize distributions.

5.5 Senior Citizen's Day Celebrations

In many prisons especially in Bangalore central prison, Senior Citizen's Day celebrations were conducted with cultural programs, group games, prize and food distribution. Many pious associations come forward to assist us in these ventures.

5.6 Youth Day Celebrations

Youth Day celebrations are conducted with cultural programs, group games, sports, and ends with prize and food distribution. Many colleges and school students came forward to perform cultural programs.

5.7 Mothers' Day Celebrations

We celebrate Mothers' and children's day celebrations with cultural programs, group games, prizes and food distribution. Catholic pious associations like couples for Christ, Legion of Mary come forward to assist us by providing sarees, nighties, and other dresses.

5.8 Vocational Training Programs

PMI volunteers took lot of initiatives in conducting seminars and training programs for the brethren behind bars, such as life skills, computer, detergent making, welding, plumbing, carpentry, etc. We invite many companies to do this kind of assistance to prisoners.

5.9 Fantasy Drawing Competition

Every year PMI organizes Fantasy drawing competition in all the jails all over India. Three best winners are awarded, and 10 consolation prizes are given, the prison from which the highest number of prisoners participated is also awarded by the national office.

5.10 Medical Camps

PMI organises many types of medical camps for prisoners such as eye camp, dental camp, orthopaedic camp, kidney and heart camps.

5.11 Counselling

PMI send many volunteers for counselling. Their regular visit develops profound personal relationships and would gradually lead to their conversion

5.12 Living in Prison Quarters

In many prisons religious sisters live in prison Quarters and serve the prisoners. They are like prison staff and have lot of freedom in serving prisoners. It is through their love and care for prisoners PMI is well accepted and easy entry in prisons.

6 Release

Jesus' outreach ministry liberated and released many from their bondages and they were led to repentance, reconciliation and reformation. Similarly, PMI after their visit to the prison release many prisoners, lead them to repentance, reconciliation and reformation.

6.1 Legal Aid

As a response to the cry of many innocent prisoners and the pleading of many culprits for mercy PMI formed legal clinics nearby the prisons with the assistance of Catholic lawyers to get justice for the innocent ones through legal channels. By our constant visits, meetings and legal aid, we could release many innocent incarcerated brethren.

6.2 Releasing Prisoner with Financial Assistance

There are many in prisons caught in petty cases and remain in prison having nobody to assist. PMI release these poor brethren by providing them financial assistance.

6.3 Premature Release

With the assistance of PMI legal clinics, we release many prisoners before the completion of their confinement. This is possible firstly by their good behaviour, secondly by the legal assistance and thirdly by financial settlements. PMI could release innumerable prisoners in this way which is a great consolation to them.

7. Repentance

Jesus' most significant message was to repent. The most important mission of PMI volunteers is to lead prisoners to repentance. For this they make use of the following ways and means:

7.1 Retreats and Seminars

Besides liturgical celebrations, PMI organises retreats in prisons so as to awake in them the guilt consciousness and repentance. In certain prisons where Christian presence is less, we make use of seminars, rhapsodies, puppet shows, and street plays which lead them to repentance and confession.

7.2 Counselling and Psychotherapy

We make use of psychological means such as counsellors and psychotherapists to lead the prisoners to self-awareness and self-acceptance and thereby to regain their lost self-image and self-esteem.

7.3 Passion of Christ

The passion of Christ, the paschal mysteries and the passion narratives in the Gospel play a vital role in leading them to repentance. The way of the cross and Holy Week ceremonies especially the washing and kissing the feet on Maundy Thursday have great significance in this regard.

7.4 Reading Passion Narratives

Reading passion narratives in the gospel is one of the best medicines to develop repentance, hope and confidence.

8. Reconciliation

Anchoring on Jesus' priority in reconciliation PMI volunteers guide prisoners to reconciliation with God, Family, victim, society and self. This is done first by building a personal relationship with them and gaining their trust and confidence by means of genuine love.

8.1 Reconciliation with God

All our ministries inside the prison and rehabilitation centres are oriented towards the reconciliation with God. Frequent visits, prolonged counselling and profound friendship with prisoners can slowly lead them to regain their friendship with God.

8.2 Reconciliation with Family

Regaining contact with family members is crucial in prison apostolate. PMI volunteers especially religious nuns visit their families and counsel them to take interest in reconciling with those in prisons. These nuns when visit their families also visit the parish priest and religious nuns in the parish and ask them to take care of the prisoner and his family.

8.3 Reconciliation with the Victim

If PMI volunteer could develop a profound friendship with the prisoner, he/she could slowly lead him to reconcile with the victim and vice versa. For this lot of prayer and fasting is needed. We also ask intercessory prayer from many retreat centres and perpetual adoration centres.

9. Reformation

Reformation of a prisoner is one of the chief goals of prison ministry. As conversion is an act of grace, we make use of the following ways and means:

9.1 Eucharistic Adoration

In most of the rehabilitation centres, national, regional, and state offices we have Eucharistic adorations for the reformation of prisoners. All PMI volunteers daily participate in the Eucharistic celebration, receive Holy Communion and are empowered with this medicine of immortality. From experience we understood the offering the Holy Mass for the conversion of prisoners is very effective.

9.2 Intercessory Prayer Group

As PMI deals with people haunted with evil spirits and influences, we fully depend on God's grace and divine protection in reforming the prisoners. We have many intercessory prayer groups in different states under supervision of state coordinators to pray and fast for prisoners' reformation.

9.3 Ascetical Practices

As self-reformation is the root of world renewal volunteers are strict to themselves. They do chain fasting, mortifications and many ascetical practices for the reformation prisoners whom they meet in prison. One of the maxims of PMI is inconvenience is our convenience. Experience taught us that the most fruitful mission is the one which we do with maximum inconvenience.

9 Rehabilitation

Many prisoners when released have no place to go. Families abandon them. Society does not welcome them. Taking into consideration of these sons and daughters PMI decided to open rehabilitation centers for them in 1991. Now PMI has more than 17 rehabilitation centers in different

states for the released prisoners. There are separate centers for male, female, boys and girls released prisoners under the care of consecrated communities and bishops' conferences.

9.1 Rehabilitation Centres for Male Released Prisoners

1) Snehashramam, Vettukad PO, Thrissur 680 014, Kerala; Director – Fr Sunil, Congregation of the Priests of the Sacred Heart of Jesus (SCJ), Tel. 7558914919; Estd 1 October 1991.

2) Santhinivas, Pathadipalam, Changampuzha PO, Edappally - 682033 Kerala; Director – Fr Binoy, Claretian Congregation (CMF) Tel. 9961272928; Estd 6 August 1995.

3) Snehatheeram, Market Road, YMCA, Alappuzha – 688 001, Kerala; Director - Fr Thobias, Tel 9526389005.

4) Kolbe Home for Released Men Prisoners, KG Kandigai, Tirutanni 631205, Tamilnadu, Director - Fr Thomas, Society of St Eugene De Mazenod (SDM), Tel 894 080 3689, Estd 2017.

9.2 Rehabilitation Centres for Female Released Prisoners

1) Snehashramam, Monvila, Kulathoor PO, Thiruvananthapuram 695583, Kerala; Director – Sr Beena, Sisters of the Poor of St Catherine of Sienna (SDP) Tel 8078818239; Estd 11 October 1992.

2) Ashadeepam, Vettukad PO, Thrissur 680014, Kerala; Director - Sr Ajita, John the Baptist Sisters (SJB) Tel 994320488, Estd 16 February 1993.

3) Jeevodaya Ashram for Women, Daddakannalli, Janatha Colony, Carmelaram PO, Bangaluru - 560035, Karnataka, Director – Sr Clara, Holy Cross Congregation, Tel. 0802 843 9926; Estd 22 January 1995.

4) Karunasadan, Kannur, Kerala, Ursulines Mary Immaculate (UMI), Estd 2004.

5) Vishwa Jyothi, Guntur Andhra Pradesh, Sisters of St Anne's of Guntur (CSSA), Estd 2004.

9.3 Homes for Prisoners' Children - Boys

1) Snehaddeepam, Inchiyani, Kanjirappilly Kottayam - 686512, Kerala. Director – Sr Beena, Holy Spirit Congregation, Tel. 94479 33675, Estd 3 July 1994.

2) Kolbe Home, 52 Thomas Layout, Sarjapur Road, Carmelaram, Bangaluru -560035, Karnataka. Superior – Sr Gertrude, Satya Seva Catechist Sisters (SCS) Tel 8296304931, Estd 2016.

9.4 Homes For Prisoners' Children - Girls

1) Asha Sadan, A 43, Sector 33, Noida, UP - 201 303, Franciscan Clarist Congregation, Estd 3 May 1977.

2) Karunyashram, Thoppil, Thrikkakkara PO, Kochi - 682021, Kerala, Director – Sr Anne Maria from Sisters of the Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament (SABS) Tel. 04842 425270; Estd 8 January 1999.

3) Premodaya, St Francis Xavier's Cathedral, St John's Church Road, Bangaluru - 560 005, Karnataka; Director – Sr Raji, Sisters of St Anne's, Tel. 080 555 4683.

4) Jeevan Jyothy, St Joseph's Convent, Anavilasam PO, Idukki – 685535, Kerala, Director – Sr Savio, Augustinian Congregation, Tel 9747627889.

5) Bonal Bhavan, Kadumeni PO, Kasaragod – 670511, Kerala, Director – Sr Tresa Chacko, Sisters of Charity of St Anne, Tel 8606350100.

6) Marie Pushpan's Girls Home, Upper Vidyapati Nagar, Kanke Road, Ranchi - 843008, Jharkhand, Director – Sr Jini, Dominicans of the Presentation (DP), Tel 7254043957, Estd 2017.

9.5 Scholarships for Prisoner's Children

In all states that PMI volunteers go beyond the prison walls in reaching out to prisoners' children for their education. This is very significant as the breadwinner of the family is behind bars and as mother becomes helpless. This year we helped nearly 650 children for their education.

10. Reclamation

Every conversion shall bring back the converted back to the mainstream of the society. PMI did great initiatives in this regard.

10.1 Vocational Training and Career Guidance

Those who come to the rehabilitation centers of PMI are led first to personal reformation through the process of repentance and reconciliation and then lead them to vocational training and career guidance.

10.2 Small Scale Business

PMI volunteers assist the reformed released prisoners to launch small scale industries and businesses such as haircutting saloons, tailoring shops, fish business, tea shops, egg business, etc.

10.3 Marriage Settlement

PMI assist the inmates in rehabilitation centers to find a suitable partner and help to settle in family life by organizing marriages and family reconciliation.

10.4 House Construction

Those who are reformed and ready to settle in family life will be helped by PMI to have a house and a job with necessary income. We will introduce them to the parish nearby and then it would be the duty of the parish priest to take care of this lost sheep.

11 Redemption

Jesus came to seek and save the lost. In imitation of Jesus who came to call sinners for repentance PMI set its goal as the redemption of prisoners. The ultimate goal of PMI is to redeem the lost sheep. Our criterion to measure the ministry is to by counting the redeemed. Thanks to the grace of God and the commitment of volunteers PMI can be proud of having more than 5000 redeemed prisoners. We can read their redeeming stories in the research magazine called Reformative Explorations and, in our Newsmagazine, called Prison Voice.

12 Prison Ministry Sunday Celebration

In 2014 CBCI decided that every year a Sunday shall be dedicated to pray for prisoners' release, reformation and rehabilitation in India. Thus since 2014 every second Sunday in the month of August is celebrated as the Prison Ministry Sunday. This is in connection with the feast day of St Maximillian Kolbe (August 14) who died for his coprisoner in Auschwitz concentration camp. Every year there will be a theme and pastoral letter and special liturgical prayers shall be prepared, printed and distributed in different vernacular to all the states in India. (remember in India every state has a particular language). The Prison Ministry Sunday 2019 was celebrated all over India on 11th August with an enlightening theme of "Walls do not Create Prisons". Prison Ministry Sunday creates great awareness to the public about the brethren behind the bars and the volunteers of Prison Ministry.

12.1 Half Marathon

To create awareness on the need of respecting prisoners on 13 January 2019 PMI Pune unit organised a Half-Marathon dedicated to the release, renewal and rehabilitation of our brethren behind bars. The focus of the run was two-fold: to sensitise the general public to the cause of prisoners and to raise funds for the construction of a fully equipped state-of-the-art rehabilitation and skill development centre for released prisoners and their families at Karjat, near Mumbai.

13 PMI Research Centre

The long-cherished dream of PMI to have a research center will be realized on 20 November 2019 when we will bless the newly constructed building for it. PMI research center focuses on research, documentation, volunteers training and publishing of books and periodicals.

13.1 PMI Publications

13.1.1 Reformative Explorations

PMI Research Journal known as Reformative Explorations – a Psycho-Spiritual and Criminology-Social Quarterly will be relaunched in November 2019 from the RRDC.

13.1.2 Prison Voice

The topics of *Prison Voice* for the past months were as follows, November – Prisons for Welfare or Security? December – Justice and Justice denied, January – Walls do not Create Prisons, February – Spirituality in Prisons, March – Incarcerated Children with mothers, April – Foreign Nationals in Indian Prisons, May – Fast Track Courts, June – Best Prison Practices for Welfare and Rehabilitation, July – Healthcare in Prisons, August – Wall-Less Prisons, September – Travel the Untravelled (History of Prison Ministry India).

13.1.3 New Books

Francis Kodiyan	<i>Love Bomb – Prisoners’ Reformation Trajectory.</i>
Francis Kodiyan	<i>Rainbow – the Theological Foundations of Prison Ministry.</i>
Francis Kodiyan	<i>The Lost – An Eightfold Path for Prisoners’ Reformation</i>
Sebastian Vadakumpadan	<i>Prison Ministry India – Volunteers’ Guide</i>

14 National Coordination

14.1 National Executive Meeting

Twice in a year PMI convenes the National Executive Meeting at its national office in Bangalore under the leadership of its chairman. PMI founders, national coordinator, secretary, treasurer, regional coordinators, representatives of state coordinators, rehabilitation centres, laity, seminary, nominees participate in this meeting.

14.2 CBCI Secretaries Meet, Delhi

PMI national coordinator serves also as the CBCI Secretary to Prison Ministry. CBCI secretaries meet takes place twice in a year at CBCI Secretariat, Bangalore.

14.3 Regional Meetings

PMI has been divided into four regions for administrative purpose: North, North East, Central and South. There are regional coordinators and regional executive bodies. Once in a year they gather, discuss and decide regional prison ministry matters.

14.4 State Gatherings

Every state has a coordinator and an executive body to take care of the prisoners in that state. In every state there are zonal coordinators and under every zone there are unit coordinators.

15 Volunteers Training Program

15.1 Full-timers' Training Program

Every year PMI convenes a 15 days volunteers' training program under the initiative of national office. This year it was on 13-28 May at Passionist Retreat Centre, Carmelaram, Bangalore. 40 volunteers took part in it, including priests and religious and laity from all over India. Prison Ministry India, Management Skills, Lead like Jesus, Juvenile Justice Act, Legal, Counselling, Interpersonal and Life Skills were the main topics by various resource persons. They were also taken to the Bangalore central prison. They were taken to St Alphonsa parish for the Prison Ministry Sunday Exposure.

15.2 Training Programs for Religious

Theoretical and practical aspects of prison ministry were taught to the novices, the young religious and perpetually professed sisters. The young religious are motivated and enlightened by the national team at Jnanodaya (CMC Sisters), Redemptorists brothers, AVP-Spirituality Centre, St Ann's of Bangalore province and Mater Dei (Goa).

15.3 PMI National Office Silver Jubilee

On 13-15 August 1994 PMI had the first national convention in Bangalore in which Fr Varghese Karipery was elected as the first national coordinator. Thus, we are in the Jubilee Year of PMI National Coordination. On 19 November 2019, the silver Jubilee of national office will be celebrated at St Joseph's Auditorium, Bangalore.

16 Future Plans

- a) Local PMI Units nearby every prison
- b) Rehabilitation Centers in every state
- c) Regional headquarters and homes for prisoners' children in Delhi and Mumbai
- d) Give me a Drink Ministry for the uplifting of trafficked women.
- e) Volunteers Training Program in Regional Centers

17. Conclusion

We express our immense gratitude to His Eminence Peter Cardinal Turkson, the Prefect of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Integral Human Development and his staff for inviting me to this esteemed conference and honouring me to present this paper on the renewal and rehabilitation of prisoners. PMI extends its wholehearted support and sharing of experiences and research findings to this dicastery and to my colleagues in other countries in their attempt to reform and redeem a prisoner. Prison Ministry does not end with visits to the prison; it goes beyond the prison walls, to their families, their children, victims and reaches to the shores of paradise. Anointed by the Holy Spirit, let us serve the Lord in harmony to renew the face of the earth and to glorify the Lord.

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