

cca news



Interfaith
Dialogue



Christianity and
Other Faiths



Peace and
Reconciliation



Environmental
Protection



K.H. Ting

Interfaith Cooperation



(Artist unknown)

We live in a time when we can no longer ignore the 'other' among us. Neither can we ignore the fact that many times we are also the 'other' to the people around us

This issue of *CCA News* calls on us to reflect on interfaith cooperation as a vital part of our ecumenical calling and commitment.

Historically, Asian Christians have been deeply involved in nation-building in their respective countries. They carried out such involvement along with groups of other religious traditions. The common desire for national independence and reconstruction was enough to bind them together in collaboration. Together with other citizens, including those of other faiths, Asian Christians also actively participated in pro-democracy movements in various parts of Asia during the 1960s and 1970s. During the 1980s and 1990s, Asian Christians became committed to the promotion of common values of peace and justice, protecting human dignity and security, and preventing the further exploitation of God's creation. Once again, this was done together with other citizens of other faiths.

Hence, as some Asian theologians have claimed, interfaith cooperation has always been part of the Asian way of life.

When the ecumenical movement (from the Greek word *oikoumene*) began, cooperation was initially undertaken among certain Christian groups, particularly Protestants, Anglicans and Orthodox. It has since expanded to include the dialogue and cooperation with Roman Catholic and other Christian groups. And now, many feel that faithfulness to the whole meaning of the word, 'whole household of God' and 'whole inhabited earth', requires much greater openness than in the past to other religions, world-views and ideologies, cooperating and collaborating with them where appropriate in the service of God, our neighbours and the whole earth.

We live in a time when we can no longer ignore the 'other' among us. Neither can we ignore the fact that many times we are also the 'other' to the people around us and among us. But our Christian calling is to live as neighbours with one another.

Now, however, we live in an age of terror, wars and rumours of war, which are often linked to differences in race/ethnicity and religion. The so-called war on terrorism now spearheaded by the United States is easily daubed as part of the 'clash of civilisations'. The aftermath of all this is an intensification of conflict in already volatile situations in Asia and other parts of the world. Many innocent people have been victimised and sacrificed as a result of this terrorism scare. Unfortunately, religions are being used by politicians and other leaders to either justify or cover up their real selfish political and economic agendas. It is therefore up to us to recover the true meaning and function of religions. We can do this if we work together with other religious groups.

A number of CCA staff and committee members have attended various programs on interfaith dialogue, solidarity work and partnership, undertaken regionally and globally. Some of these were jointly organised by CCA and other local, regional and global groups. Indeed CCA has provided leadership in various interfaith meetings. Among the issues tackled with an interfaith approach are violence against women and children, HIV/AIDS, conflict transformation, justice and peace. We are planning an interfaith cooperation consultation with regional civil society groups and ecumenical partners in Germany some time next year.

Asia is the birthplace and hub of many of the world's religions. We have lived with different religions. We will live with them in order to build together a community of peace with justice.

Season's greetings to all our readers.

—Abn Jae Woong

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Christianity and Other Faiths

Emerging theological and missiological discussions in the context of Asian plurality

Daniel S. Thiagarajah encourages Christians to be involved in interfaith dialogue and common action in the world and re-examines some perspectives that have in the past hindered us from doing so

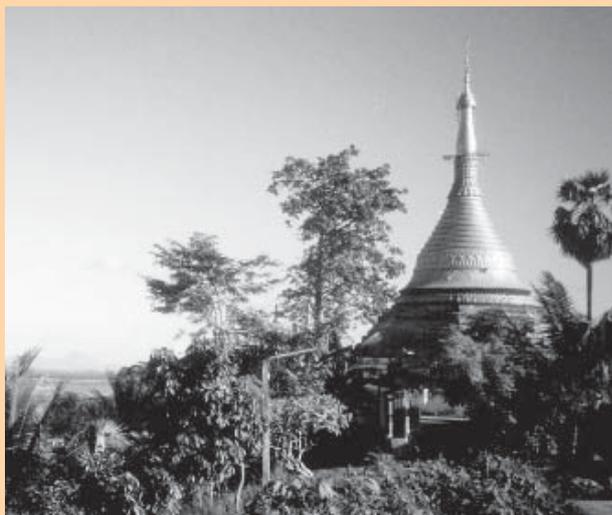
Asia's Reality of Plurality

The world in which we live today is pluralistic in every aspect. Asia is a colourful mosaic of religions, cultures, languages, ethnicities, ideologies, philosophies, races, tribes. Hence, plurality is one of Asia's richest resources. We have to realise that plurality is something given and that we must find creative ways to deal with it and live within that context. However, plurality very often leads to rivalries and enmities. They turn out to be competitive with one another thus destroying the true design of human relations. Therefore, plurality tends to be challenging.

Mission Trends in Asia

In a book published by the World Council of Churches, *Not without My Neighbor: Issues in Interfaith Dialogue*¹, its author, Dr Wesley Ariarajah, offers a profound introduction to the key issues that arise when the churches enter into conversation with people of other faiths.

The church, it is said, does not justify the existence of mission. Rather, the mission of God (*missio Dei*) justifies the existence of the church, which is called to participate in the movement of God's turning towards God's people. As such, the mission of the church takes a fresh leap forward. Any God-talk that claims to be authentically Asian must pay attention to the complexities of the Asian situation where we are called to live, proclaim and celebrate our faith. Theologising can never be done in a vacuum. It has to be done always in relation to the actual life situation. Therefore, the



A Buddhist pagoda and a Christian church. Interfaith cooperation is a vital part of our ecumenical calling and commitment (images from Myanmar)

Sri Lankan Youth Interfaith Workshop for Peace

Twenty-one Sri Lankan Hindu, Buddhist, Christian (both Protestant and Catholic) and Muslim young people gathered at

Kandy, Sri Lanka, in August for the Young Ambassadors for Peace program offered by the Uniting Church in Australia, at the

Sri Lankans' request. A common focus on the shared concern for peace meant that religious differences, language differences and the three cultures (Muslim, Tamil and Buddhist) were learned about in an atmosphere of friendship and respect. Mapping the history of conflict, learning about human rights, negotiation and mediation, sharing ideas for strategies that they as young people could implement was empowering for all of the young people. 'Their bubbly warmth, exuberance and commitment was very encouraging,' said Mandy Tibbey, CCA resource person.



Mapping the history of conflict in Sri Lanka (photo J. Balazo, UCA)

mission of the church, while it is basically *missio Dei*, has to be necessarily mission in context. We have come to a point where we cannot theologise apart from making relevant connections with the religions among which we are placed. While it is encouraging that a number of churches are beginning to take note of this important fact, many still continue to focus purely on the numerical growth of the church, thus ignoring the harmony of Asian society.

As Pannikar says, the problem of pluralism is the problem of the other. Quite often we are made to think that the 'other' can intimidate or threaten us. The very presence of the 'other' calls us for self-understanding of who we are or what we are! The question is whether the churches are not perhaps able to overcome their fear of the 'other's strangeness'. The churches are called to develop a genuine sensitivity, an understanding and a liking for 'diversity', rather than complaining about it. Mission is possible only when we are able to delight in the distinctiveness of the other.

Historically speaking, the mission activities of Christians, especially of the early missionaries to many parts of Asia, were

comprised of 'over against' attitudes. The basic problem has to do with the way the 'imperative to proclaim the Gospel' has been understood in the context of colonialism, where there had been a distortion of power relations. Several assumptions made about other faiths and cultures have affected the way the imperative was interpreted. For example the assumptions such as that the other faith traditions are devoid of revelatory impulses, that they were in error, that they need to be replaced by the Christian tradition, that there is no continuity between them and the Gospel message etc. But when we try to develop paradigms 'in relation to the other,' we also begin to learn something quite different and new. Openness and mutual learning are solicited. What Wilfred Cantwell Smith said is noteworthy: 'We have something to learn from them. By knowing other cultures, we can come to know our culture better, and can make it better ... we recognise that the we/they business is today outgrown; we are all in this together, and can learn from each other. "We" now means "us human beings"—in our diversity and yet in our overriding humanity, even community. We are

all heirs now of many cultures, and we face the future together: our common future, multicultural.'²

Dialogue—Difficulties and Possibilities

Dialogue is basically building community of conversation of heart and mind. Dr Ariarajah deals with 'five movements' through which the dialogue concern has gone in the recent past, especially in ecumenical circles. These may be summed up as the concept of dialogue itself, the search for 'community' with neighbours of other faiths, adequate foundations for that new relationship, the pastoral issues that need attention in this context and the impact of the rising secular, technological and global culture on all the religions and religious life. He says that these five phases/dimensions are, in fact, interrelated, the first of them being the concept of dialogue itself.³

Pluralism calls us to a ministry of 'connectedness'. Dialogue makes a great contribution to connecting people with one another in a caring and sharing fellowship. However, right from the beginning, people have expressed 'fears' in getting involved in

Women and Peace in Maluku: Closing the Gap between Faiths

The civil war in Maluku, Indonesia, ostensibly between Christians and Muslims, marked by brutal killings, rapes, burning of houses and forced evacuation, has smouldered for several years.

During October, in Ambon, women from all sides of the conflict, Protestant, Catholic and Muslim, came together to work for peace and 'close the gap' that had grown between them.

Conducted in partnership between two CCA member churches, the Protestant Church of Maluku (Geraja Protestan Maluku) and the Uniting Church in Australia, the workshop used interactive games and discussions to unearth prejudices and fears and the history of the conflict. They then ceremonially burned these as a gesture affirming the need to build a better future together and worked on strategies to build that future.

Said Mrs Etje Tahapary (a Protestant), 'We came with hearts as stone, but after six days, our hearts bloomed with flowers of peace. I'm sure that they will bear the fruits of peace.' For Mrs Suhaini (a Muslim), the workshop brought 'breezes of peace'. Mrs Etha Hendrikes added that 'the workshop added enthusiasm to fight for reconciliation, which had long ago become my goal'. For Zesje Rahabav (a Catholic) 'the most important thing is that I have grown in self-confidence and believe that I can change the world'.

Facilitator Joy Balazo of the Uniting Church in Australia says, 'Understanding and respecting each other is vital for building peace between all communities in Maluku, whether Christian or Muslim.'



dialogue. They feared that dialogue with people of other faiths might lead to a betrayal of Christian mission. Three fundamental reasons have been given as to why dialogue or dialogical relationships with people of other faiths is not valid or advisable. Dr Ariarajah calls these 'the three classical fears of the missionary movement'.

They are the fear of compromising the uniqueness of Christ, the fear of losing the 'urgency of world mission', and the fear of acknowledging the 'salvific significance in the religious life of our neighbours'.⁴

When analysing the hesitation and reluctance of those who have negative views of dialogue, Stanley J. Samartha identifies two

obvious reasons. One is the fear of syncretism and the other is the assumption that any recognition of the presence of God or Christ or the Spirit in the lives of other faiths leads to the danger of relativism.⁵ While Hendrik Kraemer called syncretism 'illegitimate mingling of different religious elements'⁶, Samartha described it as 'an



uncritical mixture of elements from different religions without a centre or integrating principle'.⁷ It is quite telling that the proponents of this view put forward certain basic affirmations they are supposed to make always, of which at least three can be easily identified viz the mandate given in the 'Great Commission' as recorded in Mat-

thew 28, the belief that Christ is the 'only way' to salvation and the jubilant confidence that 'every knee would bow and every tongue confess' that Jesus Christ is Lord.

Frankly we have to admit that the exclusivist claims come chiefly from the Protestant circle. Even prominent theologians like Karl Barth, Paul Tillich and Emil

Brunner were no exceptions.⁸ Paul Tillich found it possible to neglect other religions. Karl Barth held the view that the revelation of God in Jesus Christ that is attested in Holy Scripture is the only guiding principle to which every theological concern is subject. It is quite interesting to note the witty but profound comment made by Bishop

Interfaith Dialogue in Australia

Three-way Discussion

In April, a historic meeting of Jews, Christians and Muslims took place in Sydney, the first ever formal three-way discussion between the three groups in Australia. Meeting at the Great Synagogue were representatives of the National Council of Churches in Australia (NCCA), the Executive Council of Australian Jewry (ECAJ) and the Australian Federation of Islamic Councils (AFIC). In a statement participants affirmed that 'Australia generally has a strong record of intercommunal harmony and has the potential to be an example to other societies as to how people of goodwill, from these three religions and others, can work together in the interests of the community'. The meeting took place a week after the three faith community bodies issued a joint statement calling for dialogue as the way to peace in the Middle East, and condemning violence, vandalism and harassment on the basis of religion or race.

New Dialogue Group

Subsequently the National Council of Churches in Australia, the Australian Federation of Islamic Councils and the Executive Council of Australian Jewry initiated the Australian National Dialogue of Christians, Muslims and Jews. The purpose of the group is to provide opportunity for the national bodies of each faith to come together to build understanding and harmony in the Australian context. So far there have been four meetings. The most recent action of the group was to issue a media release after the bombings in Bali on 12 October (see below). The NCCA initiative is one of a wide range of interfaith initiatives across the country aimed at building peace and understanding. There are interfaith groups, espe-

cially women's groups, in many towns and suburbs. Some churches have had pilgrimages where they visit churches and mosques on their way to significant sites.

Three Faiths Decry Vicious Bomb Blast in Bali

(Statement by the Australian National Dialogue of Christians, Muslims and Jews)

Representatives of the peak national organisations of Christians, Muslims and Jews met in Sydney today at the Sydney Jewish Museum to discuss the horrific bomb attack of 12 October in Bali, Indonesia.

The National Council of Churches in Australia, the Australian Federation of Islamic Councils and the Executive Council of Australian Jewry express their sincere condolences to the families of the victims and condemn the attacks as a violent attack on humanity. The three faiths are deeply concerned about the events abroad and are holding religious services on their respective days of prayer this week.

Australians of all faiths are deeply moved by the tragedy in Bali and feel strongly for the victims who came from a variety of nationalities and religions. The National Dialogue is deeply mindful of the people of Bali who have suffered immensely.

The Australian National Dialogue of Christians, Muslims and Jews urges all Australians to work together and to show support and understanding to one another in this time of national grieving. All Australians have been affected by this tragedy and it is vital that we rally together as we have always done in the face of adversity.

Australia is a peaceful, harmonious and multicultural nation and it is important that we do not invite the tensions and conflicts from abroad to upset our stability at home. We call upon all Australians to respect the rights of religious communities and their places of worship.

Women's Interfaith Network

The Women's Interfaith Network (WIN) in Sydney, Australia, is a group of women from seven faith traditions (Aboriginal, Baha'í, Buddhist, Christian (Anglican, Catholic, Uniting and Quaker), Hindu, Jewish, Muslim) who are all leaders within their own faith communities. Meeting since 2002, the network is recognised by the World Conference of Religion and Peace. They spent their first twelve months getting to know each other and visiting a place of significance for each of their faith communities. For example they have received hospitality at a Christian monastery, the Jewish Museum and a Quaker Meeting House. Other women have shown interest in what they do but rather than have the organisation expand, they encourage others to set up their own groups and network with them. They have drawn up a constitution, which they make available to others. They meet together monthly and have also developed a small booklet called 'Sharing Faith', which helps them to share more deeply on a personal faith level.

—*Sr Trish Madigan, OP*

Interfaith Dialogue in Action

A national seminar on the theme 'A Peace Campaign for a New Indonesia' was organised by the National Forum of Indonesian Youth Groups in Jakarta in March 2002. The forum consists of people from the Indonesian Student Christian Movement, the Indonesian Movement of Catholic Students, the Federation of Indonesian Muslim Students, the Hindu Youth Group and the Buddhist Student Movement.

Sabapathy Kulandran, Bishop of the Jaffna Diocese of the Church of South India in Sri Lanka, who himself was a participant at the World Mission Conference in Tambaram along with people like Kraemer, reacting to Karl Barth's dismissal of non-Christian religions: 'D.T. Niles recalled that in his first meeting with Karl Barth in 1935, Barth said: "Other religions are just unbelief." Niles asked: "How many Hindus, Dr Barth, have you met?" Barth answered: "No-one." Niles said: "How then do you know that Hinduism is unbelief?" Barth replied: "A priori." Niles concluded: "I simply shook my head and smiled."'9

The common factor in the exclusivist approach is its appeal to scripture for an unquestioned authority. There are quite a number of exclusive verses in the Bible that present Christ as unique and the only way to salvation. Some of them are sayings of Jesus himself. For example: 'For God so loved the world that he gave his only son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life ... Those who believe in him are not condemned; but those who do not believe are condemned

already, because they have not believed in the name of the only Son of God.'10

Reading the Bible with New Eyes

These statements have to be examined carefully. We should not fall into the temptation of developing our theology or missiology on the basis of selective verses from the Bible. How do we then understand these sayings? We have to understand these sayings from the standpoint of 'language of faith'. Jesus, who touched and transformed the lives of others also became and remained the 'Christ of faith'. They have to be understood in the context of the faith commitment of the early Christian community. It is important to know that there is a Christ of faith to whom a very clear witness is given in the New Testament. These sayings derive their meaning in the context of faith. Therefore, they cannot have any meaning outside the community of faith.

The confessions given in an exclusive overtone should not be made definitive. They have to be understood in the language of faith and love. They are not to be used to

discredit other beliefs. The harmonious relationship and communion envisaged by God in God's creative acts are marred when we turn this language of faith and love into absolute truths. Here comes the question of 'truth and truth claims'. The truth and our truth claims are not identical. What we are discussing are truth claims. But truth in the absolute sense is beyond anyone's grasp. We have to recognise the different levels in which such language is used and/or the different standpoints from which these claims are made in order to have a proper understanding of these exclusive statements about Christ.

The *sola scriptura* or 'scripture alone' principle of the Reformation does not in any way mean that the Bible can be read in isolation from what has happened and what is happening in the world. 'Sola' does not refer to 'isolation' but to a 'strong engagement'. This engagement reminds us of God's engagement with the world and humanity. God relates to people in love and there can be no other way, since love is the essence of God. God's love is unconditional. This is what the Bible speaks to us. It affirms God's

Principles towards Better Interfaith Relations

1. We confess our failures and lack of love, respect and sensitivity to people of other faiths in the past. We intend to forgive one another, seek the forgiveness of others and commit ourselves to a new beginning.
2. We affirm that good interfaith relations can open the way to better interethnic relations and peace throughout the world.
3. We recognise building true community (*koinonia*), both among persons and various ethnic and religious communities, as our primary objective. We need to develop a global theology that will be appropriate for the unfolding sense of a globalised world.
4. We affirm the importance of promoting a culture of dialogue within and among all religious communities and indigenous traditions.
5. We condemn violence and terrorism as being against the spirit of all true religion and we pledge ourselves to removing their causes.
6. We shall respect the integrity of all religions and ensure that they have the freedom to follow their own beliefs and practices.
7. We believe that the different religions are enriched by identifying agendas in which they can collaborate, such as making peace, protecting the environment, eradicating poverty and ensuring the human dignity of all.
8. We affirm that it is important for us all to listen to and learn from other religions so that we can value religious plurality as a factor that enriches our communities.
9. We endeavour to live out and explain the truths of our own religion in a manner that is intelligible and friendly to people of other faiths.
10. Cultural diversity as well as religious diversity in our communities will be affirmed as a source of enrichment and challenge.

—prepared by the Rt Rev. Kenneth Fernando for the Network of Interfaith Concerns of the Anglican Communion

Multifaith Cooperation on HIV/AIDS in Thailand

Around 2,658 Asians become infected with the HIV/AIDS virus each day. The Church of Christ in Thailand AIDS Ministry (CAM), launched in 1991, has become a bridge of multisectoral and multifaith cooperation in combating HIV/AIDS.

In northern Thailand, church pastors and Buddhist monks work together on HIV/AIDS education and in providing assistance to infected persons and community groups. In cooperation with a local hospital in the Machan District of Chiang Rai, the Dog Ta Lom Group has been set up. CAM staff, church pastors and Buddhist monks provide ethical and spiritual support to infected people and their family members.

In Nakorn Sri Thammaraj Province, religious leaders from Christian and Muslim communities have committed themselves to jointly combat HIV/AIDS.

The sustained activities by community-based organisations, religious communities, NGOs and government services, in cooperation with one another, can show



Participants at an HIV/AIDS meeting organised by CCA in Thailand

the wider community how coming together on the same platform in love, understanding, cooperation, mutual trust,

healing and compassion can lead to substantial success in the reduction of the epidemic.

loving relationship with human beings. We have to understand that the Bible does not authenticate itself. It is God speaking through the Bible that authenticates it!

The question that has to be dealt with is whether God is revealing Godself only in the Christ-event. Those who take up the exclusivist verses from the Bible stick to this view, so religious pluralism appears to them as a threatening reality to be rejected. Even if they accept the universal salvific act of God in other faiths, they always add a qualifier to it to make the difference obvious. They find it difficult to get involved in a dialogical relationship with people of other faiths as to how God's purpose for the world and humanity can be realised.

The attitude of making definitive blanket judgements about other faiths has to be shunned. How can one do that without even knowing or studying the other faiths? When a person says that people of other faiths are

outside the salvific act of God, what kind of statement can it be? Such a statement is necessarily only a statement about the person's God!

The question is whether we are in mission because God has not revealed Godself to our neighbour or in spite of and indeed because of it. The grace of God is available in all religions. God's grace and God's love are not exclusive claims of any one religion. To suggest otherwise is tantamount to saying that what is revealed in other faiths is not salvific and of no significance. It may be pertinent to quote what Kazoh Kitamori, the Japanese theologian said, 'Jesus Christ is in pain in order to include those who are excluded.'¹¹

David Bosch, in his *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*¹², talks about the shift from the 'mission of the church' to the 'mission of God' as a significant leap forward in the un-

derstanding of mission. It began to be understood clearly that the primary motive of mission is the love of God towards all of God's creation. Therefore, the church is understood as an instrument in the hand of God to participate and fulfil God's own purpose for the world and humanity.

When analysing the axis of the mission and message of Jesus, one will find that it was the Reign of God (*Besileia tou Theou*), as Jesus called it. According to Dermot Lane, 'Indeed, everything that Jesus says and does is inspired from beginning to end by his personal commitment to the coming Reign of God into the world. The controlling horizon of the mission and ministry of Jesus is the Kingdom of God. The life, death, and resurrection of Jesus derive their meaning from the Announcement of the Kingdom of God.'¹³

Hence, the final reality for Jesus was not simply 'God' but 'the Reign of God'. The

Abba whom Jesus proclaimed cannot be known or worshipped apart from the Reign of God. Note that Jesus never attempted to give a definition of the Reign of God. Rather he spoke of it as 'this-worldly reality'. It is a reality that would change human society. If the church at one time defined the uniqueness of Christianity in the proclamation *extra ecclesiam nulla salus*, today it is called to find it in the proclamation *extra mundum nulla salus*, that is 'outside the world no salvation'. Hence what Juan Luis Segundo said is noteworthy: 'Jesus' listeners understood one thing perfectly: while the force behind the Kingdom ... was for him the force of God, the reality of the Kingdom was something to be achieved on earth, so that society as a whole would reflect the will of God.'¹⁴

Our task is to be copartners with God in God's 'turning' (*shub*) in grace towards humanity. Ariarajah puts it succinctly when he says, 'We need to move to a genuinely inclusive understanding of mission that places the loving, caring, judging and compassionate presence and mission of God in the heart of all human affairs, despite all its

ambiguities.'¹⁵ God desired to have a dialogical relationship with humanity in the life and ministry of Jesus Christ, whose life was always God-centred, God-dependent and God-ward. We are able to do this by way of dialogue, which is an activity related to the building of the 'Reign of God'. When dialogue ends, the forces of evil and darkness take hold of us. It is imperative to make a commitment to peace with justice by way of a common struggle towards a reconciled human community.

We will realise that the century that passed by was shaken and challenged by two important currents or movements, viz liberation theology and the Christian response to the people of other living faiths. This made us aware that the 'suffering other' and the 'religious other' belong together. Understanding the Reign of God makes us come to grips with 'the character of God', 'the ministry of Jesus' and 'the mission of the church'. These are understood from the perspective of the blossoming new reality where the poor are vindicated and the marginalised, the wounded and the excluded are accepted and included.

This article is extracted from a presentation given by Rev. Dr Daniel S. Thiagarajah, CCA Joint Executive Secretary for Faith, Mission and Unity, to the World Conference of Associations of Theological Institutions, meeting in Chiang Mai, Thailand, in December 2002.

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Truth

Why is there violence within and between religions? It is mainly because of the exclusive self-righteousness of religions insisting that the sky seen through a narrow hole of a bamboo tube is the only truth, and only they have seen the sky.

How to be a good religious person who can seek peace, freedom, equality and mutual maturity? We must accept that everything is not absolute but relative. I want to call it an interpretative enlightenment and repentance. Every human knowledge and understanding is relative because of its tendency to be limited and refracted. We must know that even an experience of religious truth can be relative.

In the world consisting of limited words and theories we are surrounded by ambiguity. Truth was always expressed and understood in the historical, cultural and linguistic context.

—Rev. Kim Kyung-Jae, Korea

A Culture of Nonviolence

In July 2001, twenty-nine participants of the Consultation in Building a Culture of Nonviolence in South Asia held in Chilaw, Sri Lanka, took an interfaith approach and declared: 'In affirming our concern to build a culture of nonviolence, we would like to state that one has to pay the price for the eradication of violence from our midst and that all the people of goodwill across religious barriers will have to be united in identifying spurious religious traits which wear the mask of true religion. This is indeed an interfaith task. Unfortunately the culture of violence propelled by religious texts and myths has now become social biographies of the South Asian countries. Consequently religion has become a divisive force. The nexus between the so-called religious protagonists and politicians has also created unrest and disharmony in South Asian countries leading to violence ... We do maintain that the quest for peace and justice is a struggle for the evolution of a lifestyle rooted in human dignity and that the religious communities are called on to translate the righteousness of God into authentic contextual endeavours.'

—*excerpts from a statement of the ACISCA South Asia Consultation on Building a Culture of Peace—An Interfaith Approach*

Approaches to Peace

In order to examine the intersections of violence, globalisation, peace and religion, the Asia-Pacific Centre of Education for International Understanding (APCEIU) hosted an International Symposium on 'Interreligious Dialogue for Peace and Reconciliation in the Asia-Pacific Region' on 4–6 December in Seoul, Korea. Representatives of various faith groups participated. Sponsors of the symposium

included CCA, the Asian Conference on Religion and Peace (ACRP), the National Council of Churches in Korea (NCCCK) and the United Religions Initiative of Korea (URI-Korea).

Participants shared case studies on grassroots transformational models that promote a culture of peace beyond merely resistant/reactive forms of protest against the culture of violence. Emphasis was placed on interfaith and intercultural solidarity through concrete plans for cooperative action.

Organisers identified multiple crises over the last century. These include violent conflicts among peoples of different religions and cultures, resulting in wars, ethnic cleansing, genocide and countless numbers of refugees. Since September 11 the policies of powerful states have contributed to a more militarised and polarised global environment. Asia-Pacific, home to 60 per cent of the world's population, is on the receiving end of these

policies. The expanding forces of top-down globalisation have deepened inequalities between and within nations, thereby contributing to growing economic and social marginalisation. These forms of economic, social and ecological marginalisation contribute significantly to mass conflicts and direct violence.

There are new religious crusades that destroy and exclude peoples and use religious language to justify 'war on terrorism', oppression of women and of different cultural groups and racial minorities. Yet many worldwide peace efforts and movements based on principles of nonviolence, human rights and justice have emerged. Diverse faiths and religions are also contributing to the resolution of conflicts that stem from social and economic injustice as well as environmental destruction.

Hence, the role of interfaith dialogue and reconciliation needs to be recognised and supported.

Multifaith Chaplaincy



The annual conference of the Tertiary Campus Ministry Association was held in Armidale, NSW, Australia, on 28 September to 2 October. It was a time for seventy-nine participants to learn about other faiths and inclusiveness on campuses in Australia.

Inputs and discussions were shared and led by people from various faiths including an imam, a Baha'í priest, a rabbi and a pagan priestess. Following that

meeting the international planning committee for the Global Multifaith Chaplaincy Conference planned for July 2004, met in Brisbane on 3–6 October.

Chaplaincy-like activities and initiatives on campuses help students in their social and spiritual development. They can also help in making students more inclusive and tolerant. CCA was represented at the meetings by youth consultant Rakesh Peter Dass.

Centre for the Study of Japanese Religions

A place for dialogue and enculturation

The NCC Centre for the Study of Japanese Religions in Kyoto, Japan, was founded in 1959 by the then Christian Mission to the Buddhists (today Areopagos) and the National Christian Council in Japan (NCCJ). The model was the Centre for the Study of Chinese Religions and Cultures, at that time part of Tao Fong Shan Christian Centre in Hong Kong.

The centre has three goals:

- To engage in interreligious dialogue to build mutual trust and respect among people of different faiths, to clear up misconceptions and prejudices and to facilitate reconciliation.
- To research on religions and cultures in Japan to deepen understanding and to inform the world.
- To assist the Japanese churches in the

task of enculturation through dialogue.

Why enculturation? A hundred and thirty years ago, the Protestant churches had just arrived in Japan and strongly identified with modern Western societies and cultures. When the centre was founded, the missionaries were still a significant feature of most of the Protestant churches, especially from North America. Today, most of the missionaries have gone and Japanese Christians have their own identity. Yet, if one were to ask someone on the street to name three Japanese religions one would rarely find Christianity included in the list. This shows that Christian culture is still seen as different from Japanese. It means that there is still a long way to go before a Japanese can become Christian without feeling a loss of original or cultural identity. The Catholic

church has been in Japan longer but still faces most of the same problems.

What are Some Guiding Principles for Dialogue?

Generally, the centre aims at creating an atmosphere of mutual trust, where participants listen carefully and ask in order to understand the positions of others. While interreligious dialogue has been and is the main task, the centre also realises the need for intrareligious dialogues among Christians and among Buddhists. Simply listening to these conversations is very educating. The best set of principles the writer has met so far was at a Catholic monastery on the island of Kyushu, where the centre had its annual residential seminar last year. The cofounder, Fr Franco Sottocornola, gave three reasons for interreligious dialogue:

‘First, we want to know the truth and we know that God has talked to people since creation, so we have to talk with the other to learn what God has told them.’ The encounter requires respect for the other and for the other’s search for truth.

‘Second, our own faith will grow through dialogue—the encounter between Christianity and Greek philosophy is but an example.’ ‘Test them all; keep hold of what is good.’ (1 Thessalonians 5:21) To see if something is good, we must judge it by: (1) our own faith (if what we are testing does not contradict our faith, we may accept it), (2) our wisdom and mind, gifts from God to be used to avoid blind trust, and (3) questioning others about their understanding of their own faith.

Fr Franco warns against fast understanding. True understanding takes time. The superficial I-know-what-you-mean attitude easily leads to the conclusion that all paths lead to the top of the mountain. ‘Any moun-



One of the teachers at the seminar demonstrating the teachings of Rennyō by reading a letter aloud. Rennyō wrote letters to his congregations across Japan in order to guide them, and the letters are still being read (actually sang) aloud in True Pure Land Buddhist temples today

tain climber will tell you that this is not so. Some paths don't lead to the top, others are very dangerous, and so climbers always look for one who knows **the** path.'

'Third, to reveal itself, truth needs love.' Where truth is sought, love must be present. As Saint Paul says, '*Veritatem fatientes in caritate.*' ('Make truth appear through love.') Participants in a dialogue must be firm in their own faith, while journeying together in respect and with a will to learn the truth from the other.

Residential Seminars

Residential seminars are held for people of different faiths. In September 2002 the centre hosted a seminar in English in cooperation with the Nippon Christian Academy Kansai Seminar House on the topic, 'Christianity in Kyoto—Continuations of History'. Participants reflected on Christianity as a religion in Japan and how far they were in the process of enculturation.

This seminar aimed at showing the ways Christianity has been and still is present in Japanese culture, through institutions such as hospitals and schools, and through activities such as social work and artistic performances. It also addressed the much-discussed topic of the future of Christianity in Japan, where mainline churches (members of NCC Japan) mostly face a decline in membership, financial difficulties and difficulties in recruiting new theological candidates.

In October the centre organised a seminar when pastors, lay people and others stayed at a Buddhist temple and learned from the experience of Rennyō, a fifteenth-century renewer of True Pure Land Buddhism in Japan. There were Protestants of several denominations, a Catholic, a Pure Land Buddhist, three from the Konko Church (a Japanese new religion) and a True Pure Land Buddhist.

The achievements of Rennyō may be summarised in three points:

- Breaking down hierarchy, so priests and laity sit on the same level.
- Involving laity by forming congregations in circles—aside from performing rituals people can discuss and see to each other's problems.

- Writing didactic letters, sent to specific circles, read aloud and copied further on.

This took the participants into deep reflections on mission, preaching practices, incarnation of the body and so on. As the Pure Land Buddhist said: 'I admire you Christian pastors who preach every week and have to go beyond simple reading of the sacred text.'

A Protestant pastor replied: 'Sometimes preaching fills too much of our worship. To me it is eye-opening how Rennyō and True Pure Land Buddhism have made the greeting of Amida Buddha the focus in their religious practice. I knew this from before, but now I understand its profoundness. Next Sunday I will make my preaching short.'

Interreligious Studies in Japan Program

'To avoid the superficial trappings of the exposures between East and West, a move towards a real encounter, where the challenges facing both East and West are taken seriously, an international study of the significance of culture and religion, community and society in both East and West is necessary. It seems to me that the project of the NCC Centre for the Study of Japanese Religions is an important step in this direction.' So said Dr Konrad Raiser, General Secretary of WCC, in his endorsement of the Interreligious Studies in Japan Program.

In October the centre welcomed its first students to this new program, in which the experiences of the Japanese churches and the centre over forty years in interreligious dialogue have something important to offer future pastors and teachers of religions in Europe, America and Asia.

Anyone with a good command of English and a serious interest in meeting with and understanding other religions can enrol for one or two semesters of ten weeks each, beginning in April and September respectively. The teachers are experts in their fields, with Christian, Buddhist or Shinto backgrounds. The program includes field trips to religious institutions in Kyoto and Tokyo, the latter in cooperation with the Tomisaka Christian Centre. For further information contact studycen@mbox.kyoto-



A stone lantern in the Catholic Franciscan House with its fundament formed as a cross. Such lanterns were used by hidden Christians in the age of persecution, and the foundation would be buried so as not to reveal the faith of the owner. Behind the lantern is Dutch Fr Lukas Horstings, who is responsible for the house near the location where the first Franciscan church in Kyoto stood in the sixteenth century

inet.or.jp or visit the website www.japanese-religions.org.

Publications

Japanese Religions is the centre's English journal, published twice a year. It aims at furthering interreligious dialogue by providing new insights on Japanese culture and religions as well as ongoing dialogue, and by reviewing books and other media that deal with these themes. Most recently, the journal featured articles on Christianity's return to Japan in the latter half of the nineteenth century. The forthcoming issue will be on 'Religion and Popular Culture'. For subscription or inquiries, contact studycen@mbox.kyoto-inet.or.jp.

—*Christian M. Hermansen*
(Associate Director, NCC Centre for the Study of Japanese Religions, Karasuma Shimodachiuri agaru, Kamikyo-ku, Kyoto 602-8011 Japan, tel and fax: +81 75 432 1945.)

The Poor Woman

New book by CCA president

Although the title, *The Poor Woman*, seems to echo one of the most common representations of Asian women as poor (or Third World) victims, Wai Ching Angela Wong's book actually makes a critique of that representation. According to the author, the common representations of Asian women as poor, suffering victims and then as heroines who struggle to rise above their situations, reflect the reality that Asian feminist theologians simply carry the baggage of their national, regional and/or postcolonial identity. Such an identity is often linked to their respective national struggle for reconstruction and decolonisation, and also to a growing regional identity of 'Asianness'. Hence, it is usually put in opposition to a Westernised or modernised identity. Ironically, however, images of national reconstruction and decolonisation are tied with the Western or Enlightenment values of progress, freedom and democracy.

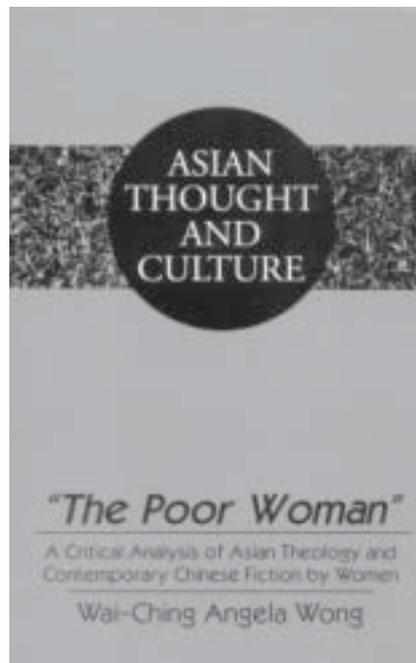
As Asian theologians wrestle with the need for contextualisation, indigenisation or enculturation of Christianity, which is often seen in many places as a 'Western' religion, they engage in efforts to recover indigenous historical and cultural resources while trying to address socioeconomic realities. For Wong Wai Ching, however, the postcolonial subject embodies a self-contradiction: of being an Asian Westernised subject.

Using arguments of Stuart Hall, Wai Ching claims that the Asian 'collective cultural identity', which heavily depends on the anti-colonial struggles of the century, is not innate, static or monolithic. It is subject to a continuous play of history, culture and power.

Instead, it is variegated, depending on the different ways people are positioned by and position themselves in relation to different questions around which boundaries often get re-sited. Hence, there is an inter-



Wong Wai Ching



'The Poor Woman', by Wai Ching Angela Wong (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 2002), 176 pp.

active relation between one's shifting location and one's contingent identities.

Consequently, for Wai Ching, the concept of Asia as a unity and of the Asian experience as represented merely by the victim and/or heroic fighter of Western imperialism overlooks the multiple levels of existence of Asian peoples.

Coming from Hong Kong, where life during the British colonisation is seen in a different light, even compared to life under Chinese sovereignty, Wai Ching challenges the tendency of Asian scholars to simplify and generalise Asianness as a homogeneous identity: of being poor and suffering victims of Western colonisation and imperialism. Such a tendency is true of theologians who then locate Asian theologising with the poor, underprivileged Asian subject opposed to the West. She argues that such a homogeneous representation of Asianness negates the multiple interests and identities of women and other minority groups of Asia. Analysing some narratives of two famous Hong Kong fiction writers, Wai Ching points to the possibility of integrating conflicting identities—'between national and postcolonial politics, indigenous cultural values and Christian worldviews, and between the multiple social and economic crossings of East and West'. She therefore calls for an acknowledgement of more heterogeneous narratives of Asia that would enable new and wider imaginary spaces for differences to emerge—among different groups, their different experiences and their different theologies.

This book challenges traditional theological formulations as well as sociological and cultural thinking about identity. It is definitely a valuable contribution to Asian and Asian feminist theologising.

—Hope S. Antone

The Church of Christ in Thailand

Serving the Lord, its members and the community

The Kingdom of Thailand

Thailand—formerly Siam—is situated at the crossroads of Southeast Asia. Its people probably came from southern China.

Thailand dates its history as a national kingdom from the thirteenth century when a monarchical government was established at Sukhothai. The capital moved first to Ayudhya in 1350 and then to Bangkok in the eighteenth century. Semi-independent principalities were gradually absorbed into the kingdom. King Chulalongkorn (Rama V), who reigned from 1867 to 1910, led Siam to take its place in the modern world and kept out the colonial powers.

The name of the country was changed to Thailand (Land of the Free) over sixty years ago. The present monarch, King Bhumipol Aduldej (Rama IX) is the world's longest reigning monarch.

The culture and tradition of Thailand derives from a strong attraction to the nation and the monarchy, the Buddhist religion and an agricultural way of life. However, materialism, consumerism, technology and Western concepts of personal rights and democratic government have challenged more traditional patterns and values.

The Coming of Christianity

The first Christian missionaries were Roman Catholics from Portugal in the sixteenth century and France in the seventeenth. In the 1820s Swiss and American Protestant missionaries arrived and Presbyterian missions were soon dominant. Their main work was in the north, based in Chiang Mai. They were well received and respected, bringing new ideas and technology, and establishing schools and hospitals.

The Church of Christ in Thailand

In the early 1930s the Presbyterian Mission invited other Protestant groups to join with them to establish a truly national Protestant church, the Church of Christ in Thailand (CCT). Gradually other churches became part of CCT.

The CCT inherited a Presbyterian form of church government, with local churches organised into pakhs (presbyteries), of which there are now nineteen. A general assembly meets every two years. Its chief officebearers are elected for four years and can be reelected for another four, after which they must step down.

Most of the membership is ethnically Thai, but there are many members of Chinese origin, and Karen and Lahu hilltribe people have joined in recent years. The membership strength of the church has traditionally been in the rural villages.

CCT comprises over 100,000 members in over 500 churches, served by over 200 ordained ministers and many expatriate workers. As it consists of persons who previously belonged to churches with diverse theological beliefs, a large degree of variety is in evidence. Infant and believer's baptism are both practised. Communion is mostly celebrated monthly, but weekly in some congregations. Lay leadership is normal and women have significant responsibilities at all levels and in worship leadership.

Ecumenical Relations

Since World War 2 an influx of missionary groups has weakened the hope of there being one Protestant church for all of Thailand. However CCT remains the largest mainstream ecumenically oriented Protestant church in the country, and is the recognised channel through which ecumenical



CCT's recent Assembly in procession



The Assembly in session

agencies at the world, regional and national levels communicate with the church in Thailand. There is no national council of churches. CCT is a member of the World Council of Churches, the Christian Conference of Asia and the World Alliance of Reformed Churches.

Church and Nation

The Church of Christ in Thailand has official status as a foundation under the Thai legal system. Relationships with the government have remained cordial through the years and members of the royal family have honoured CCT by their presence at its functions from time to time.

National Structure of the CCT

The CCT is organised in a series of 'ministries'. These are:

- Church Ministry
- Church and Community Enabling Ministry
- Human Resource development and Welfare Ministry
- Finance and Property Ministry
- Educational Ministry
- Medical Ministry.

The six ministries are responsible to the national administration structure.

Schools and Hospitals

CCT has thirty-two schools, providing education at primary and secondary levels throughout Thailand. Payap University in

Chiang Mai was the first of Thailand's private universities and has nine faculties. Christian College in Nakhon Pathom province originated in the Bangkok Christian Hospital's School of Nursing. There are eight hospitals conducted under the auspices of CCT. CCT also carries out an AIDS ministry, with emphasis on a home-based support program.

Other Ministries

Five institutions within CCT provide theological and Biblical training.

A community development and service centre in Klong Toey, Bangkok's largest slum area, conducts a kindergarten and programs for elderly citizens and youth. Other programs conducted by CCT include rural

development projects, a Christian communication institute, Bible correspondence courses, refugee programs, student hostels, guest houses, language and international schools and the Bangkok Combined Choir.

Periodicals, the care of pastors, training programs, interfaith dialogue, youth development and interchurch cooperation are also important aspects of the work of CCT.

Regional Outreach

A significant development in the last decade has been the attempt by the Church of Christ in Thailand to reach out to the country's neighbours in the Southeast Asia region. These include:

- the CCT Neighbour-to-Neighbour Project to explore areas of cooperation with Laos
- the CCT and Cambodia Church Partnership Program
- outreach among Thai workers in Taiwan, Indonesia and Singapore
- visits to the isolated Christian community in Sipsongpanna, in the Yunan province of China
- maintaining contact with the churches in Myanmar through the Myanmar Council of Churches.

The Church of Christ in Thailand seeks to emphasise that the church, in no matter what nation it exists, and at all levels, must be a church that serves its Lord, its members and the community at large.



Participants at the CCT Assembly

Cultivating a Culture of Peace Together

'Beyond the ecumenism that I used to know ...'

Second CCA-FABC Joint Ecumenical Formation

'The ecumenical experiences I had before were more focused on different church denominations among Protestants like Presbyterian, Methodist and Anglican. So the meaning of ecumenism was more about how the different denominational churches can come together as one in Christ.

'Through this program, I could enlarge my understanding on ecumenism not only among Protestants but also with Catholics, and also interact with other different religions. This meeting, JEFII, is my first time to meet, work, discuss and share together with Catholics. Moreover, the exposure program I had gave me an opportunity to explore the other religions such as Buddhism, I-kwan-tao, Muslim ...

'We have a large number of Buddhists in my country, and many parts of our traditional heritage are linked with Buddhism. I thought I understood Buddhism and Buddhists but realised that I haven't tried to interact with them as part of the ecumenical movement nor as interreligious dialogue. The exposure our group had became an inspiration for me to reach out for true ecumenism and an encouragement to start a new relationship with others.'

—Kim Hwa Jung, Korean youth

This was part of the testimony of one of the forty-five participants from fifteen countries in Asia who gathered for an innovative ecumenical training organised by the Christian Conference of Asia and the Federation of Asian Bishops Conferences (FABC) on 2–13 September. It was an experience of living and learning as an ecumenical community on the theme, 'Together in Cultivating a Culture of Peace'. It was also an experience of the ecumenical hospitality of the Taiwanese people, especially through the National Council of Churches of Taiwan, one of two councils in Asia where Catholics are members. In the opening worship and ritualised introduction (without titles) held in Taipei, Rev. William Lo, chairperson of NCC Taiwan and General Secretary of the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan, challenged the participants to proclaim the good news of the Kingdom of God through justice, peace and people's security (Luke 8:1–3, Romans 14:17–18).

He reminded us that in the Lord's Prayer 'your kingdom come' is closely followed by 'your will be done on earth'. Thus our calling is to be fully committed to God's mission, or the *missio Dei*—for us (all Christians) to be united in Christ and actively cultivate a culture of justice and peace here on earth.

Following the lunch during which members of the NCCT Executive Committee gave their greetings, participants went in small groups for a thirty-hour exposure/experience on political, migrant, denominational, interreligious and ethnic issues.

Each group went with a local guide and a team coordinator, equipped with a kit of exposure description and itinerary, basic rules, guidelines and a readiness to plunge into the realities of the life of Taiwanese people.

There was high energy. Even the four-hour travel time from Taipei to Hualien in the east coast, where we had the remaining eight days' sessions, was not without home-

work. We had to do our community building exercises, getting to know people, giving a name, symbol and motto to our group, listing our expectations and what we could contribute to the success of the program.

Experience. This was the start of the pastoral cycle spiral that we adapted as our methodological approach in this course. We listened, saw, smelled, tasted, touched life—suffering, struggles and dreams of the people in Taiwan—as much as we could. And ate a lot! Thus we had much to share—stories, pictures, drawings, laughter, wisdom etc.—in our creative reflection session. It was indeed a gallery from the groups of 'Spirit of Formosa' (political), 'Koinonia' (denominational), 'Streams of Life' (interreligious), 'Ethnophilia' (ethnic) and 'Bridges' (migrant). All through this sharing, Dr Albert Lin and Sr Dr Nonie Gutzler were with us, listening. They each helped us with the next stages of the cycle—social analysis and theological reflection, and then action planning.

'It was another way of saying that Christians need to understand and analyse the local context before reaching for their biblical texts. This was the Asian way of doing the 'bullock-cart theology', rooted in the Asian soil, which they distinguished from the Western top-down style of 'helicopter theology' that missionaries had imposed from their home countries in the past.

'This was very much a Christ-centred process with time for Bible study, gospel sharing, fun action songs, laughter, meditation and silence. There was much to learn about the history of schisms in both Protestant and Catholic traditions and the modern ecumenical movement. And about the meaning of generosity, love and sharing from the local tangata whenua.

'Reading the Bible through Asian eyes was a time of real discovery and blessing for me. It gave me new insights about familiar stories and the interfaith dialogue as in nearly every national context participants experienced their faith as a minority religion that had all too often been associated with Western colonialism rather than based on relationship with neighbours.'

—Michael Earl, participant, reporting to the Conference of Churches in Aotearoa–New Zealand

Like a diamond, participants pointed to facets of learning meaningful to each in this ecumenical formation. Joel Rapadas, a priest, claimed that 'throughout the course I grew in understanding of the basic differences between denominations, i.e. Catholic and Protestants as a whole. In the same way, I learned what can bind us together even if we continue following different in-



Celebrating Christian unity

stitutional constitutions. The kingdom of God, the *missio Dei*, is the business of all churches.'

The richness of the whole course included a cultural night, a youth night and community integration with the churches and theological community of Yushan. The intensive fifteen to sixteen hours daily of a ten-day course culminated with a closing worship, which included the ritual of foot washing and celebration of the Holy Eucharist officiated by a male Catholic priest and female Anglican priest, both participants. Indeed it was a moving experience of ecumenical spirituality.

Sylvia George, a religious sister from Malaysia, said, 'Participating in the Holy Eucharist concelebrated by a woman priest is a very powerful experience for me!' And for the JEF, she concluded, 'Gratitude is in my heart for such a wonderful program. If I want to spell out my expectations for the churches, there are many, but I have learned one thing from the program—to dialogue with other denominations/religions. I won't say it is going to be an easy task. Certainly it involves a lot of pain in the process ... we need to learn to renounce certain things (ideas, opinions, understanding etc.) in order that we can be truly human, truly alive as

Christians. Then ecumenism will experience genuine success.'

Everyone went home rich with life experiences and the responsibility of enriching others' lives—trusting in what Jesus said: 'I am with you always!'

—Corazon Tabing-Reyes

For a detailed report of JEFII see the CCA website: www.cca.org.hk



Washing feet in servanthood to others

Peace Building in Asia

In the third of the CCA Ecumenical Lectures series, Dr Judo Poerwowidagdo speaks on the role of the ecumenical movement in conflict transformation towards peace building in Asia

Reflecting upon the pertinent issue of conflict and peace, Dr Judo Poerwowidagdo, a theologian from Indonesia, delivered three lectures on the theme, 'The Role of the Ecumenical Movement in Conflict Transformation towards Peace Building in Asia', during CCA's Third Ecumenical Lectures Series, held at the Eastern Theological College, Jorhat, North East India, on 28–29 October.

Judo has held key positions in national and international arenas. He served as Executive Secretary of the Asia-Pacific Desk of PTE-WCC (now ETE) for nine years, has been president of Asian Christian Art Association, and was president of two universities in Indonesia. Currently, he is director of the Crisis Centre of the Communion of Churches in Indonesia. He is deeply committed to promoting reconciliation and peace processes in a conflict-torn world, particularly in Indonesia, an NGO activist working for reconciliation and peace.

Highlighting the vital need and urgency of peace building, Judo began his first lecture by naming this century an 'Age of Conflict'. 'There is no longer any secure place in the world,' he stated. In various events in the US, Afghanistan, the Middle East, Sri Lanka, India, Myanmar, Cambodia, the Philippines, Indonesia etc., lives are being terrorised. 'These and many other armed conflicts continue to characterise world events as the twenty-first century progresses,' he stated.

He explained that conflict is a normal thing and by nature dynamic—life without



Judo Poerwowidagdo

'The task of the church includes being an agent of reconciliation, as peacemakers and peace builders among the nations of the world'

conflict is abnormal. The root causes of conflict generally spring from 'unjust or unequal distribution of resources', 'different interests and needs', 'conflict of values, information and human relationship', and 'unjust social or organisational structures'. He also referred to horizontal conflict (conflict between communities) and vertical conflict (conflict between a local community and government).

'Negotiation, conciliation, mediation, arbitration, litigation and legislation' were some approaches that can bring solutions to conflict. Judo feels mediation is the best

approach as it involves both parties. He suggested that the steps towards reconciliation and peace building begin with conflict resolution, but that does not last long. What is then required is conflict management and peacekeeping, then conflict transformation or peace building, which is the end or the goal of the conflict intervention.

The second lecture contained a chronological sketch of the ecumenical movement's involvement in peace and reconciliation work, beginning with the Mission Conference in Edinburgh (1910) and culminat-

ing in the formation of World Council of Churches in 1948. Talking about the ecumenical movement and its efforts towards 'unity', he asked, 'What form of visible unity are we [the churches] seeking?' He cited the decision of the last WCC Assembly, held in Harare, Zimbabwe, in 1998, to adopt the Decade to Overcome Violence as an overall concern.

He then spoke about the Christian Conference of Asia (CCA), formed in 1957 and formerly known as East Asia Christian Conference. Throughout the forty-five-year history of CCA, churches in Asia have faced many problems, which involve not only ecumenical concerns such as the unity of the church, mission and witness, but also ongoing issues of war, poverty, development, human rights violations etc. As Asia continues to face these issues, the churches will also continue to face the question, 'What is the role of the churches and the ecumenical movement in transforming conflicts into the building of peace in Asia?'

The third lecture provided answers to that question. Talking about the 'ministry of reconciliation and peace', Judo suggested that we need to look for a better theological understanding of the nature, function and task of the church. The task of the church is not just to preach the good news or to work for the unity of the church, but also includes being an agent of reconciliation, as peacemakers and peace builders among the nations of the world. He proposed peace education as the first step for churches to teach members of the congregation, especially young children. He cited the working methods of the Crisis Centre of the CCI as an example to start with.

He concluded by saying that peace building in Asia is a task that we must be seriously concerned about. However risky the task is, it is a mandate that the Lord has called us to bear witness to. God through Christ Jesus has 'committed to us the message of reconciliation' (2 Corinthians 5:19).

Along with Judo, Wati Longchar, ETE Consultant for Asia and the Pacific, also spoke on the topic, 'Challenges for Ecumenical Theological Education in Asia: Towards a Common Strategy and Mechanism'. Quoting from Simon Oxley's Creative Ecumenical Education, Wati stated that ecumenical theological education is much broader than institutional collaboration. 'It involves equipping the whole Christian community for multiple forms of ministry in the

Christian community and wider human society.'

Wati cited the three main problems that theological communities in Asia face: financial viability, lack of sufficient interaction between the church leadership and theological institutions, and male-biased theological education (with males representing 80 per cent of theological students, 90 per cent of teachers, and 95 per cent of members of the governing members).

In order to tackle the problems, Wati proposed several strategies to facilitate ecumenical theological education in Asia: promoting federated faculty in a region, sharing resources, educating congregations to mobilise resources for theological education and providing equal opportunities to both males and females, particularly in the theological field.

The third CCA lecture series ended with a panel of four speakers sharing the theme, 'Ecumenism in Northeast India: Needs, Problems and Prospects'. The discussion emphasised the need for making known an understanding of the ecumenical movement among churches at the grassroots level in Northeast India and promoting the work towards interdenominational fellowship among local churches. This needs to go on, even as there also needs to be a greater emphasis on the need for peace education in the region.

—Wati Longchar

Towards a New Ecumenical Relationship

In order to strengthen ecumenical relations with the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA (NCCCUSA), Ahn Jae Woong, Tony Waworuntu, Park Sang Jung and Sharon Rose Joy Ruiz-Duremdes participated in the NCCCUSA-CCA Consultation on Peace and Justice in Asia on 4–5 October in New York.

The consultation grew out of a visit by CCA General Secretary Ahn Jae Woong to the US in early 2002, during which it was recognised that 'Asia has become a second front for the US-led war on terrorism'. The consultation expressed solidarity and shared concerns and common struggles as churches, bound by a mutual love of Christ and for one another and called for a more peaceful and just world.

The participants noted that the war on terrorism has often harmed interfaith dialogue and exacerbated tensions. Relationships between Asian churches and US churches have suffered during the last ten years because of 'intensified denominationalism, which largely stems from a culture of unilateralism in the US, rather than mutual and collaborative upbuilding'.

During the intensive discussions, both bodies concluded that globalisation has damaged their long history of strong relationship and that it is very urgent to 'develop and strengthen a new approach to our ecumenical relationship based on our mutual commitment to live and work in the unity of Christ'.

Representatives of the two bodies called for the immediate establishment of a joint NCCCUSA-CWS Working Group on Asia and the preparation of a memorandum of understanding establishing an ecumenical covenant between the two bodies. The NCCCUSA will send a delegation to CCA and Asia next year to continue this work and further strengthen mutual understanding.

Full details of this consultation can be found on CCA's website: www.cca.org.hk.

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Yinavawu

CCA's youth intern



'Yinavawu' means hello in Chang Chung Chih's aboriginal language. Chung Chih is CCA's youth intern this year. A social worker by training, she finished her social work degree from Tunghai University, a Christian university in Taiwan, in 1999.

She hails from the city of Taitung in the south-eastern part of Taiwan. She says proudly, 'My mother is an Aborigine of the Puyuma tribe in Taiwan. Her clan is called Kasabakan'. According to Chung Chih, Puyuma is one of eleven aboriginal tribes in Taiwan. Before Taiwan was colonised by the Japanese at the end of the nineteenth century, it was Taiwan's largest tribe and had a matriarchal social organisation. Today it consists of about eight clans and less than 9,000 people (of the 420,000 aborigines in Taiwan). These eight clans live in Taitung. Puyuma people have brown skin, big eyes and high noses. 'We are famous for our beautiful voices and music,' she added with a smile.

Her mother passed away ten years ago. Since Chung Chih's father is Taiwanese, the Taiwan government does not count her as

an Aborigine. But as for her, she says, 'I am Aborigine!'

She comes from a family of four children. Her father still lives in their hometown with his lovely dogs. Her two older sisters married three years ago, and her younger brother is a soldier. Chung Chih is the first and only Christian in the family.

Asked how she became a Christian, she recalled the time she met a Christian from Hong Kong who was visiting her hometown. It was her thirteenth birthday and no-one had remembered it. A Christian woman started talking to her, sharing stories about Jesus. It felt like this woman was celebrating her birthday with her, she said. From that time, she became interested in Christianity.

She recalled how she used to hear about the church in her childhood. Some churches would send cars that played beautiful songs and brought storybooks for children. Whenever the cars came, she would run to take books and listen to stories!

'I think God never gives up on me. Before I believed in the Lord, I met many good friends who are Christian and they encouraged me to participate in church programs. In my last job, I worked in a Christian organisation. I was so amazed by God's leading!'

After graduation from university, she taught in an elementary school, a fulfilment of a childhood dream. After ten months as a substitute teacher, Chung Chih sensed a different call to service. Taiwan was hit by a big earthquake, which killed more than 2,000 people. She decided to go to the disaster area and found a job in the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan at a recuperation community centre for earthquake victims. She felt that this was a good chance for her to use her social work training.

With only one piece of luggage, she went to the centre to offer help. The church pastor let her stay in the house of a church pastor who had moved to another church. One day, while talking with one of the church members, she learned that this pastor had gone to Zwei-swei where Chung Chih had lived and taught. She was quite surprised to learn that the Zwei-swei Church is just one Presbyterian church and that

there are more than 1,200 Presbyterian churches in Taiwan! More surprising still was how the pastor and she seemed to have switched places! She felt that this must be part of God's work.

In 2001, Chung Chih had the opportunity to participate in the Council for World Mission's Youth Work Camp in Malaysia. It was her first youth camp. She made many friends and learned many things from different cultures and countries. Although she could not speak English very well, she felt that the youth could still understand each other very well. It was a wonderful experience for her and from that time on she became interested in ecumenical actions.

How did she know of the CCA internship? Last June, PCT had a youth ecumenical training program and Chung Chih participated in it because she wanted to gain more ecumenical experience. When she asked one of the PCT staff whether there were any opportunities of participating in ecumenical programs, she was told of the CCA Youth Internship.

After being chosen as this year's CCA youth intern, Chung Chih helped with the local arrangements for the exposure program of the Joint Ecumenical Formation held in Taiwan in September. She came to Hong Kong soon after. Chung Chih finds ecumenism a new and interesting word. 'I know that it's very important for young Christians to work and share together in our mission. I want to share this with other youth in Taiwan. If possible, I also want to help PCT encourage youth to be concerned about peace, justice, human rights, gender and other social issues.'

Life in Hong Kong is an interesting thing, she says. 'This is my first time to come here and the first time to live in another country. People here are kind and friendly, especially when they know that I come from Taiwan. The language and characters are similar to Taiwan's, but we have different cultures. For example, we don't hang lanterns in the mid-autumn festival but Hong Kong people do! I think I will learn more and more different and interesting things before I go back!' she added with her big, bright smile.

—Hope S. Antone

Manila Covenant on Peace for Life

Church leaders call for interfaith solidarity to resist war and globalisation

Another world is possible! So declared 135 church leaders, scholars and peace advocates from twenty-eight countries in the 'Manila Covenant on Peace for Life', the final declaration of the International Ecumenical Conference on Terrorism in a Globalised World, held 23–26 September in Manila, in the Philippines. Convened by the National Council of Churches in the Philippines in cooperation with CCA and the WCC, the conference called for the formation of a 'global coalition' to confront 'US global hegemony', which the covenant claimed has a name—Empire.

Envisaged as a major contribution to the Decade to Overcome Violence, the proposed coalition of ecumenical and multifaith movements will include an 'African, Asian, Latin American and Pacific solidarity network' and take the form of a 'People's Forum on Peace for Life'. Decrying the US 'war on terror' as 'state terrorism of historic dimensions', the covenant called attention to the US's 'opportunistic use of violence to consolidate and expand its economic, political, cultural and military hegemony'. This theme was echoed by renowned experts on geopolitics—Dr Alejandro Bendaña, Prof. William Tabb, Prof. Hans Koechler and Dr Ninan Koshy—who assailed the 'war on terror' as the main threat to human rights and global security and underlined the link of terrorism with economic globalisation.

Conference participants expressed grief over both the events of September 11 and the death and destruction inflicted on the people of Afghanistan. They strongly opposed the march to war in Iraq and Israel's US-backed aggression against the Palestinian people. Intoning, 'Not in God's name,' the participants confessed that 'the church has often been complicit with the power of



empires'. They avowed, 'The Christian church is to give witness to Christ's lordship and so resist oppression and idolatry of any state or group that claims divine justification for power over others.' They rejected 'religious extremism and religious intolerance of all forms' and condemned 'any actions that degrade the lives of people regardless of one's faith, race or ethnicity'.

Participants deplored the opening in the Philippines of the second front of the war on terror as this threatened peace and security in Asia. They demanded an immediate end to the re-entry of US troops, under the guise of joint military exercises, and criticised US actions designating the Communist Party of the Philippines and the National Democratic Front as terrorist organisations. Women delegates gave moving testimonies on the impact of the war on women and children based on findings of the international women's peace mission in Central Luzon and the 300-strong international women's solidarity forum in Manila held just prior to the conference. The conference reaffirmed the key role of women in building a world of peace.

Speaking before the crowd of conference participants and local church people that formed a human chain in front of the US embassy on 27 September, conference coordinator Carmencita Karagdag of the NCCP said the Manila conference was the largest international ecumenical meeting ever convened on the implications of September 11 and the first to have taken an unequivocal position against both terrorism—specially state terrorism—and globalisation.

(The complete text of the Manila Covenant is available on the CCA website: www.cca.org.hk.)

Call to Responsibility

Environmental protection is a vital part of our ministry

The environmental issue is not merely a matter of aesthetics or scientific facts and figures. It is not just a matter of tree planting, conservation, biodiversity or greening. It is an issue of life and survival. The environment is an interdependent political, social and economic and spiritual issue (holistic) that affects all living and non-living creatures.

This statement was the opinion of the twenty participants in an Environmental Training Workshop held in Saitama, Japan, on 23–28 September.

The participants were workers from churches and Christian-based organisations in India, Thailand, the Philippines, Indonesia, Myanmar, Taiwan and Japan, who affirmed that ecological and environmental concerns are vital in ministry.

Participants confessed how 'we failed to maintain order and harmony with nature, resulting to the groaning of the whole creation and total chaos. Because we failed, the whole natural world is in crisis.'

They named the following causes of the crises, which need to be addressed urgently: the abuse of natural resources, the economic crisis and the concentration of wealth, poor governance, toxic proliferation, aggression and violent mentality, and globalisation. The participants stressed that the vicious cycle of poverty and environmental degradation would continue unless we confess and change our attitudes that devalue and disgrace the environment. Participants came up with an 'open letter'

challenging churches to be God's agent to restore creation. 'The church cannot abdicate this role to lead and work with communities to improve the lives of people,' they said. Echoing the slogan 'Live simply so others can simply live,' the participants called on churches to develop ecological and environmental centres to conscientise people about their responsibility as stewards, and advocate counteractions to plans that threaten the integrity of creation.

They called on churches to develop clear theological perspectives on the care and integrity of creation and to promote biblical eco-spirituality among people. They also called for environmentally friendly plans for

harnessing energy (e.g. solar energy and rain water) and for the physical setup of church buildings etc.

They felt that theological institutions involved in the formation of clergy and lay leaders should be vigilant about what is happening in the environment. 'As educators, teachers and formators, there is a need to change our mindset by looking and understanding things and events in a holistic manner and making ecology and environment not isolated from other issues of human life.' The program was jointly organised by CCA-JID and the National Christian Council in Japan.

—Prawate Khid-arn



Indigenous Peoples

Journeying together with them in their search for life

Indigenous people from Australia, India, Japan, Malaysia, Taiwan, the Philippines and Myanmar met recently in Cairns in northern Australia, where they were welcomed by an elder of the Irukandji people.

Their common statement affirms that: 'As each participant unfolded their stories on their journey of hope, we found many common rich spiritual heritages and how God has been travelling with us since the beginning of time, deepening our faith in God through Jesus Christ. The sharing of myths, stories, dances and songs in worship and in consultation helped us to discover that there is hope in the midst of despair. We experienced the power and hope of the human person within the Yarrabah community, which strongly demonstrated to us the similar sufferings of all indigenous peoples worldwide.'

'The indigenous peoples are the original inhabitants of the land and although we are the minority group of the general population, we continue to struggle to preserve our cultures. It is our right to develop ourselves as peoples in accordance to our cul-



Indigenous people meeting in Cairns, northern Australia

tural patterns, social institutions, legal systems and spiritual heritages. Our spirituality is a holistic one. We uphold a spirituality where nature, human beings and spirit are dependent on each other as organisms and are inseparably interrelated. Land is the greatest gift of God to us. It is our mother and sustaining power. Land is sacred and

the sustainer of life. It is the land that owns us and gives us our identity. It is through the land that we become one with all living creatures, our ancestors and spirits and our sacred power. Land is our identity and spiritual foundation. We find spiritual strength, hope and liberative power by maintaining harmony and justice with God, the land and all of creation. We recognise in indigenous cultures and spiritualities the potential to further human development and to save the earth from destruction.'

The meeting mourned the loss of land, culture, genocide, exploitation, discrimination and alienation experienced by the aboriginal/indigenous people all over the region. There was plenty of celebration, laughter and joking too.

Participants called on churches everywhere to journey with them in building a better future together. The organisers, CCA and the Aboriginal and Islander Commission of the National Council of Churches in Australia, were delighted with the deepened bonds of understanding and trust which the meeting brought and hope to do further work together.



Learning an Australian Aboriginal dance

Love Accompanies the Pilgrims

The Writings of K.H. Ting

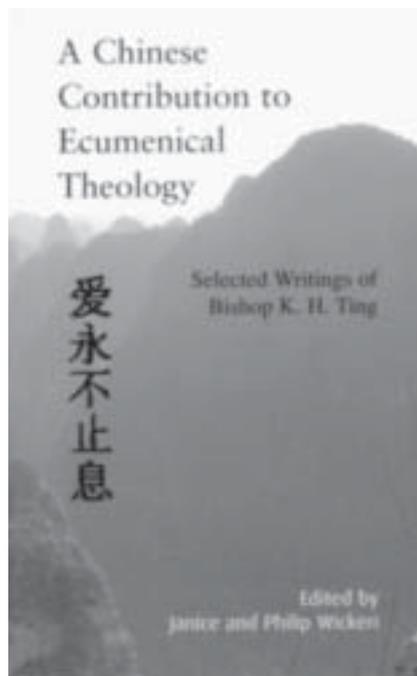
It is timely that the WCC has published an inspiring collection of the writings of Bishop K.H. Ting during this, the fiftieth anniversary of the Nanjing Union Theological Seminary, of which Bishop Ting is principal. This book introduces us to Bishop Ting the theologian. The book contains original material not found in the very popular earlier book *Love Never Ends*.

The universal church missed the 'voice' of this great Christian leader for many years during the Cultural Revolution and later because of his devotion to the development of the church in China. I have therefore quoted liberally from the work rather than attempted to summarise his beautifully expressed theology, in order to bring his words directly to readers.

Spanning his entire ministry, this selection indicates the breadth of Bishop Ting's theology, his active engagement with the world and some of his dilemmas, questions and ways of dealing with them. For example: 'Our Christian vocation is so glorious that nobody is worthy of it. But at the same time, it is so glorious that your worthiness and your unworthiness do not count at all ... We must take our vocation seriously so that God may use us. Yet, in another sense, we need not take it so seriously that we do not leave room for the Holy Spirit to operate in us ...' (1948)

He addresses very pressing questions: 'Let us not be too sure that we have any right to say that we and our church are too weak to be missionary. Let us rather say that we and our church are not missionary enough to be strong.'

He strongly asserts the importance of the church being authentic in the local setting: 'For the church in any country to have a



'A Chinese Contribution to Ecumenical Theology: Selected Writings of Bishop K.H. Ting', edited by Janice and Philip Wickers, WCC Publications, 2002

selfhood of its own, a real and not a borrowed identity is all-important. First, it provides evangelical effectiveness in the country where it is located, and, second, it gives enrichment of the church universal in its understanding and worship of Christ.' (1984)

He does not want the church in China to be cut off from the church universal, but sees the need for rootedness in Chinese soil as the point from which to engage the rest of the world.

His insights are remarkably consistent, modern and open to the world. For exam-

ple: 'The Pauline doctrine of justification by faith alone and not by works was liberating. It implied that Christianity was not to remain a sect within Judaism but to enjoy the freedom to maintain give-and-take relations with other cultures, with the potential to become a world religion ...' (1984)

He is clearly at home living and working with those of no faith as well as people of faith, because of his understanding of the Gospel: 'Love is the true essence of human life. Love is the greatest truth. Love is the most fundamental attribute of God. Love is the intrinsic attribute of the universe ... the true essence of the universe is love and wholeness—the love made manifest in Christ. With this love in our universe we are held firm, we can be at peace, we can live with strength and meaning and we can give thanks and praise ...' (1988)

In one of the most moving and contemporary addresses in the book, 'The Cosmic Christ' (an address to Friends of the Church in China, given in England in 1991) he asserts that: 'Christ is not so small as to concern himself only with religious or spiritual or ecclesiastical things, or only with believer, or only make converts of those who so not yet consciously believe in him. He is the one who sustains the universe by his works of power (Hebrews 1:3). His is the primacy over all creation. He exists before all things, and all things are held together in him (Colossians 1:15, 17) ... His concern is to bring creation to its fruition when love, justice and peace become the rule. Redemption, like education and sanctification, does not stand against creation but is one process with creation. Not only communities of Christians here and there but humankind as a whole and indeed the whole

cosmos are within the realm of Christ's redemptive work. The Holy Spirit, in the same way, is not only the giver of gifts to Christians or to the church, but also inspires all created beings with great goodness and beauty ... In the nineteenth century the picture that inspired many Western Christians was that of the church going into the world and gathering all nations into its fold. Today, what catches all Christians' vision is the picture of Christ leading the whole creation towards the goal of unity in God. In this saving work of his, all human movements of progress, liberation, democracy and humanisation are joined. The church is important as the place where Christ is explicitly known, confessed, adored and preached. The world needs the church's gospel of forgiveness and reconciliation and peace. But God's saving work is not coterminous with the boundary of the church. It has the whole cosmos as its limit ...'

Bishop K.H. Ting affirms that the whole earth is both created and redeemed. 'Creation contains redemption and the purpose of redemption is to fulfil God's creation.' (1995) The optimism of his focus on becoming, transformation and progress shapes his view of China's history and the way God works: 'This emphasis on God as the great Lover working out his purpose for the world brings in its train an understanding of reality as in the process of becoming. It gives us hope for and beyond history. We cannot fathom the actual time and manner of the end of history but we know it will come about and we are sure it will be the triumph of love and grace. The way from alpha to omega is never a straight line but love accompanies the pilgrims.' (1991) and 'with a heart full of merciful love, he is constantly creating and redeeming ...' (1998).

He goes back to the Bible to see God's presence expressed through all peoples and cultures: 'We in China are still finding out from the Bible how Abraham received blessing from Melchizedek, the pagan king of Salam; how Cyrus, King of Persia, a Gentile, carried out God's purpose and made possible the rebuilding of the holy city and holy temple; how Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon also worked for God who thereby bestowed

on him a recompense and how, in Isaiah 19, God calls Egypt "my people" and Assyria "the work of my hands" alongside Israel "my heritage". Because we have seen and experienced goodness, truth and holiness among the followers of other paths and ways than the church, we cannot resist a vision of the universal creative and redemptive activity of God for all humankind, aside from the particular redemptive activity of God in the history of Israel and in the person and work of Jesus Christ.'

He traces the way in which the understanding of the people of Israel about the nature of God grew and developed (1998). His own understanding has references to the Chinese sage Lao Tzu, to his friend and fore-runner Y.T. Wu, to the early church fathers such as Tertullian and Aquinas, to the Second Vatican Council and to theologians such as Teilhard de Chardin. But it is clear that he steep himself in reading the Bible with eyes open to uncovering the mysteries of God. He is therefore aware of different images of God emerging from the scriptures, citing the female references to God in Isaiah 66:13, Isaiah 49:15 and Psalm 131:2 (1991) as enriching our understanding of the love of God for all creation.

Bishop Ting is well aware of the power of the image in shaping our understanding of God, saying: 'God is the cosmic lover, not a cosmic tyrant or punisher. He works by education and persuasion rather than coercion and forced obedience. He lures and invites and waits for free response and does not resort to scolding and reprimanding. That is why many of us in China find the gospels' analogy of the transformation of seeds and the growth of plants in air, rain and sun more appealing than that of beating and controlling the sheep with rod and staff. God's is the will to fellowship, not the will-to-power. For Chinese Christians, to discard the image of a vengeful, frightening God, of God the omnipotent, in dealing with humans and to come to adore God the lover, the sympathiser, the fellow-sufferer who comes to us, is a shift that is truly liberating.' (1991)

This is probably true not only for Chinese Christians, but also for many of us!

—Mandy Tibbey

Violence against Women a Sin

The Lutheran World Federation, which represents about 62 million Lutherans worldwide, is calling on churches to tackle the sin of violence against women, which harms individuals, communities and the church's image.

Pricilla Singh, LWF secretary for women, states, 'What has not yet been sufficiently forthcoming from the pulpits is an open denouncement of violence against women and a confession from the church of its inability to contain it.'

LWF President Dr Christian Krause said. 'The growth of a civilisation of humanity and solidarity with the weak is essentially related to a clear, comprehensive "no" to violence against women.'

The World Health Organisation has just released a report indicating that nearly one in four women will experience sexual violence by an intimate partner in their lifetime. Says Dr Gro Harlem Brundtland, WHO Director-General, 'While images of terrorism, war and civil unrest pervade our world view, we know little of the millions of children, adolescents, women and men who suffer in silence from abuse and neglect. Fifty to seventy per cent of women who die due to homicide are killed by their current or former husbands or boyfriends. Behind closed doors, even the safest of communities are touched by violence in one way or another.'

—LWF

DOV Manager

The National Council of Churches in Australia is working on developing the Decade to Overcome Violence. A manager has been appointed to carry the program further—Rev. Dr Jon Inkpin. Violence will be looked at from a broad perspective, including the underlying issues that lead to violence in peoples' lives, as well as violence nationally, regionally and globally.

—NCCA

Removing the Barriers

The churches' task for peace and security in northeast Asia

In the aftermath of September 11, peace and security issues have become more critical in northeast Asia. The US-led war on terrorism has meant the world has become more terrorised, and violence seems to be people's daily bread. Since the US attacked Afghanistan and identified some countries as 'axes of evil', instability, insecurity, tensions and conflicts have increased.

Insecurity in Asia is due to political, ideological, religious and ethnic conflicts. They include the conflict between Taiwan and China, based on issues of sovereignty and self-determination. Insurgency, violence and poverty in various Asian countries have resulted in increased migration, internal displacement and an increased number of refugees, both economic and political.

The Impact on the Region of the USA and the War on Terrorism

Peace and security issues in northeast Asia are dominated by the policies of the US, Japanese, Russian and Chinese governments. In particular, the US war on terrorism clearly identifies North Korea as belonging to the 'axis of evil'. This war on terrorism is undermining the achievements that had been made for peace in Asia, especially between North and South Korea. Peace talks between the government and the Communist rebels and separatist groups in the Philippines are now threatened by the same policy, and being used as an excuse to bring back a US military presence in the Philippines, South Korea and Japan.

The Balikatan bilateral war exercises between the Philippines and US will be expanded to include Singapore, Thailand and other countries in the southeast Asian region.

Thus, in the coming years, multilateral war game exercises (with live targets) are



by Tony Waworuntu

set to commence in the Asia-Pacific region. These war exercises and the forward deployment of US troops must be viewed in the light of the renewed military aggressiveness of the US in the region. This US military adventurism is to protect the stated imperatives of US foreign policy, which have remained the same since the Cold War era.

Neither the end of the Cold War and the absence of an external threat to the US, nor the era of globalisation has persuaded the US to abandon its national security strategy. In fact, it is because of economic globalisation that the US has continued as before—to maintain 'defence capability', to open foreign markets, to 'promote democracy' and to protect the 'free world'. In other words, a US military presence assures US economic interests, protects US investments and markets, and secures sea lanes (such as the Strait of Malacca) and lines of

communication that are essential for the transport of crucial materials such oil.

The war on terrorism and the consequent US intervention in south and southeast Asia have far-reaching implications for the peace and security of the region. They pose a serious 'security dilemma', not only for major regional powers, China and Japan, but also for secondary powers such as India, Pakistan, South Korea and Indonesia.

China and Taiwan

Any change in the balance of power between China and Taiwan could destabilise the entire region. Recently Taiwan President Chen Sui Bian flatly rejected the PRC's terms of reunification and stated strongly that 'whoever tries to invade and whoever wants to eliminate the Republic of China is our enemy'.

China has weaponry and troops that could be deployed against Taiwan, and Taiwan has just entered the final stage of developing a cruise missile with a range of 300 km that could easily reach the southern and eastern coasts of China. Taiwan is also undertaking to buy new arms and weapons from the US worth US\$520 million.

The US, on the one hand, has kept up its so-called 'one China policy', but on the other hand has said that if China tries to take over Taiwan by force then it would be in the front line to protect Taiwan. This approach suits US economic and strategic interests and keeps tensions and fears in the Taiwan Strait high and hostile.

As long as the tension remains high, the desire to improve and modernise defence systems is also strong. The peace and stability of the region largely depends on the maintenance of the balance of power and construction of a region-wide framework of cooperation that could diffuse violence and conflict.

Japan

After the cold war and now under the so-called war on terrorism, the US pressured Japan to play a greater military role. Following the 1996 redefinition of the US-Japan security alliance, a new military arrangement, the US-Japan Defence Cooperation Guidelines, was created in 1997. This bilateral arrangement obligates Japan to mobilise its public and private resources, personnel, facilities, services and military force to join American military operations conducted in 'areas surrounding Japan'. North Korea was specifically mentioned by the designers of this arrangement as a 'clear and present danger' that has an 'important influence on Japan's security'.

Thus, it is clear that a military conflict in the Taiwan Strait could be a possible trigger for US-Japan joint military action, though the Japanese and US governments quibbled on this point considering China's strong reaction.

The result of this is that Japanese ruling groups are now freeing Japan from its constitutional constraints, changing the pacifist clause from self-defence status to that of a fully fledged war-capable state with a large army deployable overseas—as it now is in Afghanistan and East Timor under the label of the UN peacekeeping forces. As the world joins the US-led war on terrorism, US hegemony remains.

The Korean Peninsula

Since the Korean War much has been done by governments, NGOs, and churches for reunification of the Korean peninsula. With his 'Sunshine Policy', South Korean president Kim Dae Jung has tried his best to bring the two sides to peaceful negotiation towards reunification of the Korean peninsula. But so far we have not seen clear signals from either side to end the division.

With its recent admission that it is pursuing a nuclear weapons program, North Korea has created a huge diplomatic headache for the US, China, Japan and Russia and South Korea.

All of these countries are saying that they want a peaceful resolution to the challenge posed by North Korea's nuclear program. Meanwhile, conservatives in the US ask why

the Bush administration is not taking as tough a line on North Korea as it is on Iraq. But China, South Korea and Japan are against a military action in North Korea, claiming that economic and political ties will be severely strained.

In admitting that it has a nuclear program the North also gained considerable potential political leverage in its dealings with the US. If not stopped, the uranium enrichment program will provide more fissile material than the North needs for its own weapons program. A nuclear war on the Korean peninsula is simply unthinkable. But here the North can once again play the nuclear card—offering to scrap its new nuclear program and with it the risk of fissile material exports, in exchange for political and economic concessions from the US and South Korea.

For whatever motives, Kim Jong Il has once again raised the stakes in nuclear bargaining, stressing that his government will not disarm unilaterally without reciprocal threat reduction and strategic cooperation on the part of the US. What is likely to happen next? Will Washington decide to settle through dialogue in a revamped agreed framework? Can Pyongyang be trusted? If Washington opts for an 'emergency action' after labelling North Korea as an 'axis of evil,' what will the price of US victory be in an open-ended conflict in Korea? Will it be geopolitically prudent and politically tolerable to accept such a risk?

The US-led 'maximum international pressure' on the North is likely to subside over time (as happened with Pakistan and India in 1998 after they declared their nuclear credentials and saw international sanctions hastily imposed and then gradually lifted). But what if rumours about drastic internal changes in North Korea are well founded and Kim Jong Il turns out to be a reformist leader who sincerely wants to reform his country and does not believe in the use of force?

The international situation has undergone profound and complex changes, particularly in the aftermath of September 11. The unfair and irrational unilateral policy of the US government has caused more conflicts and tensions. To a certain extent, this

will affect the reunification process in the Korean peninsula. Careful attention should be paid to these developments, which could destroy the peace and reunification efforts that have gone on until now.

Globalisation

The present threats to peace and justice in the region are caused by the impact of globalisation, which has produced political neocolonialism, economic imperialism, environmental degradation, cultural domination etc. These pose moral and ethical questions, which churches need to address.

Globalisation is a greater threat to people's lives than the dreadful attacks on the World Trade Centre in New York or the Bali bomb. People are more worried about the security of food, jobs, income and the environment than the US military's idea of security. Security should be concerned about the whole range of people's lives, and militarisation is a destabilising factor. In short, people's security calls for demilitarisation. Genuine peace cannot prevail without justice in the world.

The Role of the Churches in Asia

In the search for peace in northeast Asia, there is a place for more visible expressions of Asian ecumenical solidarity. Asian churches and peoples have a shared history and need to be in solidarity with one another, realising common hopes and dreams. Asia is rich in traditions and values that could be taken as valuable lessons. Asian churches, in solidarity with the churches and people in Korean peninsula, could explore the possibility of a new approach to peacebuilding in northeast Asia and reunification of the Korean peninsula. It is important that all barriers that exist between North and South be removed unconditionally without any intervention from outside Korea. The genuine wishes of reunification from both sides need to be expressed through common prayer, worship and study, through a firm commitment to building mutual trust and understanding, through the sharing of resources and through manifesting Christian love and solidarity.

The continuing efforts of churches in the Korean peninsula to reach out to each other across walls of division and against all odds astound and inspire other churches in Asia. The continued division of Korean peninsula remains a challenge for churches in Asia and all over the world to dig deep into the resources of their faith in order to overcome barriers and limits and to manifest their oneness through mutual support and steadfast love. It is time to reach across physical boundaries and walls of division towards true and genuine reunification of the Korean peninsula.

The churches in Asia are called on to give a high priority to the ministry of peacemaking. It is an imperative laid on them by the faith they profess. Churches in Asia are in the forefront of the struggle for peace and justice. They are called to recognise the signs of hope in the movements for peace and justice and to join and work together with their brothers and sisters of other faiths. They need to exploit the rich spiritual resources of this region to find a firm common ground for peace and justice. Commitment to the ministry of peacemaking and conflict transformation has to be reflected at all levels of church life.

Starting with the Tozanso consultation in 1984, the Glion meetings in 1986, 1988 and 1990, Kyoto consultation in 1995 and most recent meeting in Kyoto in March 2001, efforts at cooperation by the ecumenical community have contributed greatly toward peace and security in northeast Asia. Through the WCC, in collaboration with CCA, churches have tried to develop relationships and build contacts with the church and Christians in North Korea, by pastoral visits, exchanges and dialogues between Christians from both sides.

Removing the barriers that divide Koreans may seem an immense and insurmountable task, and seemingly beyond the reach of the churches in Asia. CCA, in cooperation with people from other faiths, will continue its pivotal role in building bridges between churches in northeast Asia and in strengthening and mobilising Asian ecumenical solidarity for peacebuilding and conflict transformation

—Tony Waworuntu

Bangladesh

Dr **S.M. Chowdhury** was elected president of the Bangladesh Baptist Church Sangha in April. He will serve in that capacity for four years. A medical doctor by training and now retired, S.M. Chowdhury served as honorary treasurer of CCA in 1977–81 and then as a member of the CCA Presidium in 1985–90.



S.M. Chowdhury

China

New officers of the China Christian Council (CCC) are **Bishop K.H. Ting**, Honorary Chairperson of the Seventh Standing Committee of the Chinese Christian Three-Self Patriotic Movement (TSPM) and Honorary President of the Fifth Standing Committee of CCC; Mr **Luo Guanzong** and Dr **Han Wenzao**, directors of CCC/National TSPM Advisory Committee; Elder **Ji Jianhong**, chairperson and acting secretary general of the National Committee of TSPM of Protestant Churches in China; Rev. **Cao Shengjie**, President and Acting General Secretary of CCC; **Chen Shunpeng**, **Deng Fucun** (in residence in Shanghai), **Gao Feng**, **Hua Yaozeng**, **Jin Wei** and **Wu Chengrong**, vice-chairpersons of National Committee of TSPM of Protestant Churches in China; and **Fan Chengzu**, **Lin Zhihua**, **Lu Mingyuan**, **Shen Cheng'en**, **Su Deci**, **Sun Xipei** and **Xiang Jianhua**, vice-presidents of CCC.

India

The governing council of Tamil Nadu Theological Seminary, which met on 22–23 August 2002 unanimously elected **Mohan Larbeer** as the next principal of TTS. He will succeed Dr Dhyanchand Carr starting next academic year.

Rev. Dr **Govada Dyvasirvadam**, current general secretary of the Church of South India, was consecrated Bishop in the diocese of Krishna-Godavari at St Andrew's Cathedral, Machilipatnam, by the Moderator, Most Rev. Dr K.J. Samuel.

Dr **Wati Longchar**, joint ETE consultant of WCC and CCA, was ordained as a minister on 3 November in Jorhat.

Indonesia

Under the theme 'Seek the Lord and Live' (Amos 5:6a), the 14th Synod Assembly of the GEPSULTRA Synod (Protestant Church in South East Sulawesi), met and elected new members of its Executive Board. Elected were Rev. **Eddy Buke** (president/chair), Rev. **Marthen Sambira** (vice chair), Rev. **Immanuel Kaluasa** (secretary), Rev. **Petrus Missi** (vice secretary) and **Jusuf Linting** (treasurer). The subtheme of the assembly was 'Renewing the pattern of service management for the realisation of church's ministry of strengthening harmony, unity and maintaining the integrity of creation in entering regional autonomy and globalisation era'. Based on the theme and subtheme, the synod drew up a five-year plan and revised the statutes of GEPSULTRA.

Japan

The 33rd General Assembly of the United Church of Christ in Japan (Kyodan) elected the following officers at its meeting on 19–31 October in Tokyo: Rev. **Nobuhisa Yamakita** (moderator) and Rev. **Makoto Kobayashi** (vice moderator).

Korea

The General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of Korea (PCK) elected the following officers during its meeting on 9–13 September at Youngnak Presbyterian Church in Seoul: Rev. Dr **Choi Byung Kon** (moderator) and Rev. Dr **Kim Soon Kwon** (vice moderator).

The General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of the Republic of Korea (PROK) chose the following officers at its meeting on 24–27 September at Kuem Sung Church in Kunsan City: Rev. Dr. **Chun Byung Kuem** (moderator), Elder **Song Young Ja** (vice-moderator (lay)) and Rev. **Kim Ock Nam** (vice-moderator (clergy)).

On 30 October the Korean Methodist Church chose Bishop **Kim Jin Ho** as the presiding bishop of the Bishops' Council.

Thailand

The Church of Christ in Thailand held its 27th Biennial General Assembly on 21–25 October in Bangkok. Elected were the main officebearers of CCT: Rev. Dr **Boonratana Boayen** (moderator), Rev. **Virat Koeydul** (vice moderator), Rev. Dr **Sint Kimhachandra** (general secretary) and Deacon **Taweesak Mahachawaroj** (treasurer).

Decade to Overcome Violence

Launching the Decade to Overcome Violence, the World Council of Churches identified the following goals for the decade:

- Addressing holistically the wide varieties of violence, both direct and structural, in homes, communities and in international arenas and learning from the local and regional analyses of violence and ways to overcome it.
- Challenging the churches to overcome the spirit, logic and practice of violence; to relinquish any theological justification on violence and to affirm a new spirituality of reconciliation and active nonviolence.
- Creating a new understanding of security in terms of cooperation and community instead of in terms of domination and competition.
- Learning from the spirituality and resources of peacebuilding of other faiths to work with communities of other faiths in the pursuit of peace and to challenge

the churches to reflect on the misuse of religions and ethnic identities in pluralistic societies.

- Challenging the growing militarisation of our world, especially the proliferation of small arms and light weapons.

—*Clement John, WCC*

Crisis in Pakistan

WCC Delegation

'An extreme kind of terrorism never witnessed before—an execution carried out by professionals,' was how a former officer of Pakistan's airforce described a recent attack on the offices of a Christian institution in Karachi. Seven young Christian workers were killed in the 25 September attack on the Idara-e-Amn-o-Insaf (Committee for Justice and Peace). The officer was speaking at a 5 November meeting of church leaders with a delegation from the World Council of Churches (WCC) on a pastoral visit to Pakistan. The delegation included Tony Warawantu, CCA co-executive secretary for Justice, International Affairs, Development and Service.

The 2–9 November WCC visit to Karachi and Lahore was intended to express solidarity with churches and Christians, hear about the effects in Pakistan of the war in Afghanistan and learn about the challenges currently facing Pakistan's churches. The delegation met church and lay leaders, lawyers, jurists, leaders of non-governmental and Islamic organisations, members of political parties, families of blasphemy law victims, and the families of the Idara staff killed in the terrorist attack. They were told that such attacks against Christians have increased since the war, and that the security of the Christian community is gravely threatened.

Grave Crisis

The overall message to the delegation was that Pakistan is going through a grave crisis. Feudalism, corrupt politics and repeated military interventions in civil and political life have destroyed democratic institutions and systems of governance. According to members of Pakistan's human

rights commission, injustice, poverty, illiteracy and rapid population growth are preventing progress and development. These factors, they said, are responsible for the current environment of religious intolerance, hatred and sectarian strife in which human rights violations by both the state and private actors are rampant.

Other representatives the delegation encountered pointed out that corrupt and inefficient law enforcement, a complacent judicial system and lack of accountability have encouraged a climate of violence and impunity. What some observers called a 'military tyranny' is driving Pakistan towards further divisions, while the government's preoccupation with military and political matters leaves it little time to address ordinary people's life-and-death concerns. Christians, but also other minorities, are trapped in this situation and subject to discrimination and attacks.

Christian Grievances, Muslim Grievances

Hearing about two brothers who, charged under blasphemy laws and sentenced to thirty-five years imprisonment, have been in jail for four years pending a High Court appeal, the delegation was moved by their plight and that of their families. Delegation members were impressed by the faith and Christian commitment of a group of young Christian girls who had been forced to convert to Islam. Meeting the young widows of the Idara victims, they were sharply aware of the difficulties such women face in Pakistan's cultural context. And they were distressed to hear from church leaders that none of the perpetrators of terrorist attacks on Christians in Taxila, Murree, Islamabad and Bahawalpur have been apprehended and brought to justice.

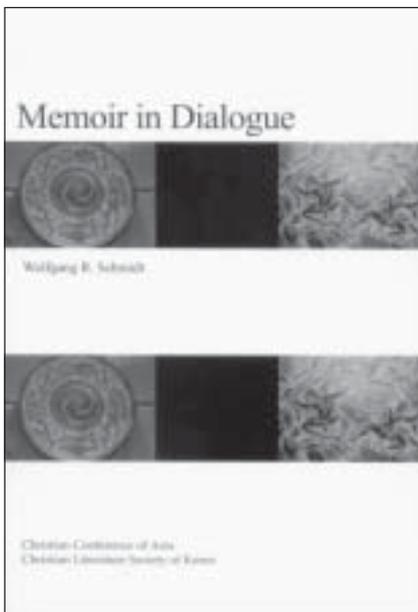
Another set of grievances was voiced at a meeting convened by the recently formed Muslim-Christian International Federation. Here, the WCC delegation heard complaints from Muslim leaders about ill-treatment of their compatriots in the West. According to the leaders, the Christian West has systematically targeted Muslim countries such as Afghanistan, Palestine and Iraq, and Muslims are subjected to racial profiling, dis-

crimination and arbitrary arrests in the US, the UK and Australia. This creates resentment and anger in the Muslim world, the leaders said.

The delegation assured these leaders that churches in the US, UK and other Western countries do not agree with their governments' policies on the war in Afghanistan and a possible war against Iraq. The churches' theological and ethical position, the delegation explained, is to denounce violence and the spirit and logic of war, and to insist that differences and disputes be resolved peacefully through the United Nations and not through war or military strikes.

At the close of its visit, the delegation called on the WCC to continue to monitor the situation of Christians in Pakistan, and to accompany and support the churches there during this period of trial and tribulation.

—WCC



Memoir

A new book, *Memoir in Dialogue*, by Wolfgang Schmidt, has been published by CCA in association with and thanks to a generous financial contribution from the Christian Literature Society of Korea. A full review of this book will appear in the next issue of *CCA News*.

Overcoming Violence

The National Ecumenical Youth Assembly held 22–27 October in Nagpur, India, brought together around 500 youth from twenty-nine member churches and other related bodies of NCC India. Joining them were other youth and the participants of South Asian Youth Empowerment for Transformation (SAYET) 2002, which ended on 21 October, also in Nagpur. The theme was 'Peace with Justice: Youth overcoming Violence'. Topics included peace with justice and economic challenges of society, peace with justice in a state sponsoring fascism, peace with justice in the church with a 'culture of silence' and peace with justice for women in a patriarchal society.

Protest against Anti-conversion Law in India

Many faiths in India are protesting a law in the state of Tamil Nadu, India, prohibiting conversions.

Enacted in the wake of massive numbers of conversions to Buddhism and Christianity of Dalits and other low-caste people in different parts of India, the ban stifles religious freedom.

More than 5,000 church-run schools and colleges closed on 24 October as part of Christian protests. Ecumenical prayer services have been held by Christians to pray for a change of heart.

—CWM

2,000 Children to Attend National Ecumenical Children's Assembly

In what is probably the first such initiative on such a scale within the region, the churches of India are holding an ecumenical children's assembly in January 2003 at the Bishop Westcot Boys' and Girls' High School, Namkum, Ranchi, Jharkhand, India. The aims are to enable children to experience ecumenism and multiethnic, linguistic and cultural harmony in a rural tribal context. The 2,000 children, aged 10 to 14, will enjoy informal worship, learning by doing, exposure to indigenous culture, thematic presentations and games. At least 30 per cent will be girls. It is hoped that the consultation will encourage congregations to develop the capacities and involvement of children in congregational life, encourage attitudes that promote children's development and provide an experience of ecumenism at an early age. A delegation that visited the CCA Centre recently, the Most Rev. Zechariah James Terom, Rev. Enos Das Pradhman and Mr Richard Thornton, all of the Church of North India, hosting the meeting, indicated that all the churches are looking forward to the event.



World Anglican Meeting in Hong Kong

The Anglican Consultative Council (ACC) met recently in Hong Kong, hosted by CCA member church the Sheng Kung Hui of Hong Kong, whose innovative Christian work, tremendous hospitality and warmth was highly appreciated. Representatives of CCA-member churches from Asia came from Japan, Korea, India, Sri Lanka, Pakistan, Bangladesh, the Philippines, Malaysia, Hong Kong, New Zealand and Australia.

The ACC is the main representative conciliar body of the Anglican communion worldwide, and has lay, clergy and/or episcopal representation from each of the thirty-eight Anglican provinces around the world (in 160 countries), from all continents and the Pacific. African representatives comprised around 45 per cent of the gathering.

The keynote speaker, Dr Ishmael Noko, General Secretary of the Lutheran World Federation, called on the communion to confront the issues of our times, including globalisation, environmental degradation, the HIV/AIDS pandemic, race, caste and gender inequalities with a living faith and principles of communion and reconciliation. He drew on the African concept of *ubuntu*, meaning the sharing lives as human beings in community, as an aspect of the cultural riches of Africa that can enrich our world.

CCA Associate General Secretary Ms Mandy Tibbey delivered CCA's greetings to the meeting as did other ecumenical guests on behalf of the WCC, the Roman Catholic Church, the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople, Bishop Iranaeus for the Mar Thoma church and others. The ACC passed numerous resolutions—for all efforts to prevent war in Iraq, against US unilateral action and for sanctions to be lifted, calling for justice for Palestinian people, calling on churches to frankly face up to HIV/AIDS, for a return to peace in the Sudan, on the environment and other matters.

Reports were heard from the (then) Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr George Carey,



Dr George Carey, Rt Rev. Peter Kwong, Dr Rowan Williams, Rev. Dorothy Lau

from the general secretary, networks on ecumenical work, interfaith work, family, environment, migrant and refugees, peace and justice, youth, from the Anglican observer to the United Nations and others.

The newly elected chairperson and vice chairperson respectively of the ACC are the Rt Rev. John Patterson, Primate (i.e. head) of the Anglican Church of New Zealand and Professor George Koshy, dynamic former general secretary of the Church of South India.

Daily Bible studies were led by the Rt Rev. Kenneth Fernando of Sri Lanka, CCA

past president, Dr Jennie Plane Te Paa, head of the Te Rau Kahikatea theological college in Auckland, New Zealand, and the Rt Rev. Ian George, Archbishop of Adelaide, among others. Those who led the daily Eucharist included CCA President Most Rev. Dr Joseph Mar Iranaeus, who shared part of the Mar Thoma liturgy, Rt Rev. Bolly Anak Lapok, Assistant Bishop of Kuching, Malaysia and the Venerable Winston Halapua, now of New Zealand.

The meeting was a tremendous time of sharing and planning for the Anglican part of the Christian family.



ACC worships at Holy Trinity Church, Kowloon

Photos: J. Rosenthal, 'Anglican World'

Bossey Ecumenical Training Programs

The World Council of Churches Ecumenical Institute of Bossey in Switzerland offers programs designed to educate ecumenical leaders, both clergy and lay, for service around the world. The following programs may be of interest.

Human Sexuality

4–11 April 2003

This seminar will look at the urgent need for theological and biblical interpretation to meet with people's experiences, especially within the context of social and cultural changes affecting our understanding of family and new life styles. It is an opportunity to try and address the gap between official moral positions taken by the churches and the challenges experienced in pastoral relationships.

Applications are subject to a selection process to maintain regional and gender balances.

Cost: CHF820

Women in Mission

4–10 June 2003

This seminar focuses on women in mission and aims to contribute to a common search, dialogue and documentation of women's ways of doing mission. It aims to bring together women doing mission and women missiologists from various contexts and denominations.

Cost: CHF720

Interpreting the Bible in Pluralistic Contexts

28 June – 4 July 2003

In an era of globalisation and sophisticated communication people from other faiths read the Bible with other eyes and may be enriched by the wisdom of the Bible in ways that are different from what



Christians learn. Christians may also be inspired by reading the sacred texts of other faiths. Can this bring people together? Is a hermeneutic of inclusion possible, in which the Bible is read alongside other texts? This seminar intends to discuss the problems that arise from these and similar questions.

Cost: CHF720.

The Nature and Goal of the Ecumenical Movement

7–13 July 2003

After more than fifty years of ecumenical fellowship, sharing and dialogue within the WCC, there is a growing need both from some churches as well as individuals and groups of theologians and lay people to reflect afresh on the nature and goal of the ecumenical movement. What is the role of the ecumenical movement and the WCC?

Cost: CHF720

For further information contact the Ecumenical Institute, Château de Bossey, CH—1298 Céligny, Switzerland. Tel: +41 22 960 73 00, fax: +41 22 960 73 10, email: bossey@wcc-coe.org or Internet: www.wcc-coe.org/bossey. Successful applicants may be able to obtain a small subsidy from CCA.

Blue Angels

Some of the housework at Bossey is done by an international group of young volunteers, willing to help for a period of three or four months. They live in single rooms together with other students, and participate in many activities. Applicants should be between the ages of 18 and

22. The main language spoken is English, but it is an advantage to know some French. Applications are accepted throughout the year.

Seminar on Trauma Awareness and Recovery

Church World Service in New York has announced a new program, 'Seminar on Trauma Awareness and Recovery' (STAR), which is geared towards empowering religious leaders and caregivers to deal with stress, trauma and peacebuilding. For the next two years, once a month and for five days, a STAR seminar will be held on the campus of the Eastern Mennonite University in Harrisonburg, Virginia, USA, or a surrounding area.

Created in the aftermath of September 11, the STAR program is designed to equip caregivers in addressing the needs of individuals in stressful or traumatic situations. The seminars include training in trauma awareness and response, security, justice and peacebuilding; an elective, interactive experience drawing on the knowledge and skills of participants and facilitators; and an interreligious project, open to congregational leaders from all religious traditions.

In each seminar, there will be four spaces for international participants, drawn from CWS partners around the world. These participants will be people who are dealing with training in the areas of stress, trauma, conflict or peacebuilding. The program is open to midlevel persons and lay people who are engaged in these areas of work. Since wars and crimes around the world involve religions, persons of various religious experiences are invited to apply.

Selection of participants will be based on the experiences of the individual around issues of peacebuilding, the availability of space and diversity.

Seminars, meals, lodging and transportation are free. The hope is that the cho-

sen individuals will be able to share their experiences at the seminar and so when they go back to their communities they can continue to empower others affected by conflict and trauma.

If you have names to recommend, please contact Moses Ole Sakuda, Associate Director, Mission Relationship and Witness, Church World Service, email: Msakuda@churchworldservice.org, fax: +1 212 870 2223, or mail: Moses Ole Sakuda, Associate Director, Mission Relationship and Witness, Church World Service, 475 Riverside Drive, Suite #700, New York, NY 10115, USA

Please include the recommended person's address, phone number and email address. A suggestion of a preferred month would also be appreciated.

CCA Position

Librarian/Archivist

Are you an experienced archivist or librarian or have strong ecumenical and academic experience in Asia and are interested in assisting the ecumenical movement? Would you like to live in Hong Kong for some time?

Then please send your application and curriculum vitae to CCA.

Our archives and library need a skilled person to continue the process of developing the archives and the library, through culling, cataloguing and storing material. Simple accommodation on site and a subsidy will be arranged. There is some flexibility in the time and duration of appointment.

Please forward your application by the end of January 2003 to Irene Chan at CCA.

Obituary

Alan Brash

The ecumenical pioneer, Rev. Dr Alan Brash, died at his home in Christchurch on 24 August 2002 at the age of 89. He will be remembered for his work in the World Council of Churches and the East Asia Christian Conference as well as his leadership in interchurch aid.

Born in New Zealand of Scottish farming stock, he dedicated himself early in life to the ministry of the Presbyterian Church and followed the traditional path of continuing academic studies in Scotland. The turning point in his life came in 1937 when the World Faith and Order Conference was held in Edinburgh. New Zealand could not afford to send a second delegate to this Conference so it permitted the young student to attend as a representative. From that experience Alan became a fervent advocate for ecumenism.

Back home in New Zealand he accepted a call to the ministry in Wanganui but retained his passion for interchurch activity and when the National Council of Churches was formed in New Zealand in 1941 he be-

came its second General Secretary (1947–1952 and 1956–1964). He always had an international perspective in his work and became a strong advocate for Asia through his many trips there on behalf of aid projects.

When the East Asia Christian Conference was inaugurated in 1957, the Asian church leaders turned to Alan to be part of their first secretariat on a part-time basis. He joined D.T. Niles of Sri Lanka and U Kyaw Than of Burma as the triumvirate who helped to develop the Asian ecumenical movement, which today is known as the Christian Conference of Asia. At first the work was part-time but in 1965–68 it became a full-time position and he and his wife Eljean moved to Asia.

His efficient work in aid programs led to his appointment as director of the British aid organisation Christian Aid, a position he held from 1968 to 1970, when he was persuaded to head the aid operation of the World Council of Churches. In 1974 he became deputy general secretary of the

World Council under Philip Potter, a position he retained until retirement in New Zealand in 1978.

On his return to New Zealand he became the Moderator of the Presbyterian Church of New Zealand for one year and then continued to work part time for several years for the National Council of Churches in its Auckland office.

Alan's wife Eljean died in 1991. They are survived by their son Don, their daughter Lyn, five grandchildren and three great-grandchildren.

Alan lived to see his son elected to parliament in the New Zealand general election in July, having just resigned from being the longest-serving central banker in New Zealand's history.

Those who knew Alan will always remember him as a strong prophetic voice in both church and community. A competent speaker and writer, his clarity of ecumenical vision has been an inspiration to several generations of Christians.

—Ron O'Grady

Global commitment to addressing problems of children

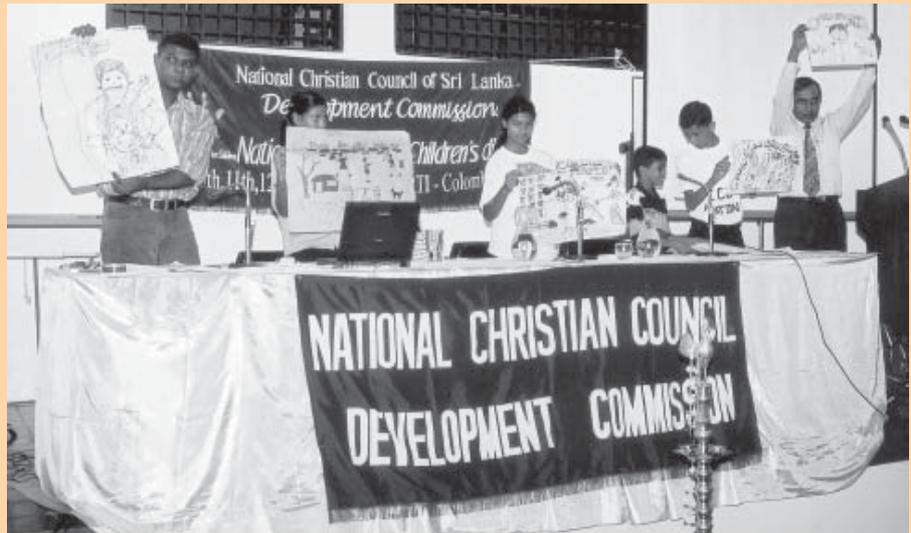
Affirming Children's Rights

The growing attention to the rights of children is illustrated by the Convention of the Rights of the Child (CRC) and the UN special sessions on children held in May 2002, and by many other conferences and seminars in all parts of the world during the past decade.

The World Council of Churches and the Christian Conference of Asia have organised a series of consultations on 'Affirming Life and Dignity of Children in Asia'. These have been held in such countries as Thailand, the Philippines, Indonesia and Malaysia.

The most recent one was coorganised by the National Christian Council of Sri Lanka, CCA and WCC on 10–12 October in Colombo, Sri Lanka. Its theme was 'Ensuring Dignity of Children through Affirming Their Fullness of Life'. Around fifty-six people were present, more than 50 per cent of whom were women.

The NCC of Sri Lanka has been involved with children's issues for more than two decades and their activities have cen-



Panel of children exhibiting their drawings in Sri Lanka

tered on nutrition, Sunday school education and child development. In 2000 attempts were made to inaugurate children's clubs in various parts of the country. The council has already established a children's desk. However, there is a need to work out a comprehensive long-term sustainable plan to address issues pertaining to children.

The seminar was conceived to enable participants from the churches, the NCC and the ecumenical organisations to gain awareness and deeper understanding of the situation of children and to come up with an action plan.

Prior to this consultation a seminar was conducted for children on 12–14 August at Kurunegala in order to hear their views. Activities were done in such a way that children could express their ideas and feelings in a participatory manner. Some of the child leaders were invited to make presentations at the adults' seminar.

—Josef P. Widyatmadja



Children show artwork at the Indonesian consultation