



Christian Conference of Asia

# cca news



Prophecy, reconcile  
and heal

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## Prophecy, reconcile and heal



During the tragic civil war in Lebanon, a young Christian training for the ministry was walking from one village to the next when he was ambushed by an armed Druze militia. The Druze ordered his captive down the mountain trail to a spot where he was to be executed. But the Christian, who had also received military training, surprised his captor and was able to disarm him. Now, the tables were turned, and it was the Druze who was ordered down the trail. As they walked, however, the Christian began to reflect on what was happening.

Recalling the words of Jesus, "Love your enemies; do good to those who hate you." His anger softened and he found he could go no further. Throwing the gun into the bushes, he told the Druze he was free to go. He turned round and began climbing up the hill. Minutes later, he heard footsteps running behind him. "Is this the end?" he wondered, thinking his enemy had retrieved the gun and was about to finish him off. Ignoring the noise he carried on, never glancing back. Suddenly his captor grabbed his arm and embraced him and in tears poured out thanks for sparing his life.

Mercy is often garbed in the clothes of forgiveness.

Global communities continue to live in a conflict-ridden and divided world. People are crying for genuine peace and a just and sustainable society in every global corner. Asia continues to suffer from conflicts and wars, violence and threats to peace and human security in the context of natural calamities, and global financial crisis which, according to the UN, will further aggravate existing conflicts and people's vulnerabilities.

The lack of peace is evident in the negative impact of economic globalization that continues to widen the gap between the rich and the poor in many countries and between the developed and developing nations. There is also political and structural violence carried out by dictatorial or negligent governments, and in some places covered up by so-called ethnic or religious differences. Corruption in places of authority and the use of military might to curtail dissent only creates more unrest and violence.

Conflicts are part of the human condition. They certainly seem to be part of the life of churches as well. So the question we must face is not whether we will disagree from time to time, but how we can do so with reconciling aims. This is a particular challenge for the ecumenical movement, which has as major goals the attainment of Christian unity and the protection and promotion of human dignity.

One of the most important ways of promoting reconciliation and healing is to build a strong sense of global solidarity. We need to have a strong sense of global solidarity between rich and poor countries, as well as within individual countries. Globalization eliminates certain barriers, but is still able to build new ones. It brings peoples together, but spatial and temporal proximity does not of itself create the conditions for true communion and authentic peace. Effective means to redress the marginalization of the world's poor through globalization will only be found if people everywhere feel personally outraged by the injustices in the world and by the concomitant violations of human rights.

In these situations, the churches, as mandated by divine faith, have a special role and responsibility in promoting peace, reconciliation and healing the world. As churches we are called to be prophetic witnesses and builders of peace, for "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God." (Matthew 5:9). We are also called to build God's reign of peace and to do justice (Micah 6:8).

Churches are called to speak and join their voices together to effect social transformation in a way that reconciles and heals our societies. The Church as God's instrument for peace has a special role in pursuing human dignity, protecting basic human rights and bringing fullness of life to the people who are exploited and rejected. The Church, which is the sign of communion with God and of the unity of the entire human race will continue to offer her contributions so that justice may flourish leading to a world of peace and solidarity.

Prawate Khid-arn

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# The 13th CCA General Assembly

## a theological rationale



The CCA General Assembly held normally once in five years, is the apex point of the life of the CCA. The General Assembly is the supreme body of the CCA and it attempts to bring together the representation of the Asian ecumenical family. Therefore, when it gathers once in five years it formulates the direction and the thrust of the ecumenical movement for years to come. The basic purposes of the Assembly are mentioned in the CCA Constitution, which says:

1. The main functions of the Assembly are:
  - a. to celebrate the unity of the Church in Asia in worship, study and action
  - b. to express the common vision of the churches for the direction and mission of the CCA
  - c. to review the mission and receive the work of the CCA carried out through its programs, and to set general directions for the future programs of the CCA
  - d. to speak on public issues when necessary
2. The Assembly shall elect the four Presidents and the Honorary Treasurer. The Assembly shall also elect the General Committee and the Program Area Committees.

The question is how does the Assembly carry out what is required by the Constitution and how do we theologically justify the constitutional requirement? This paper is a response to these two questions and provides a guideline to those who are interested in such guidelines.

### The Process and Outcome of the Assembly

During the Assembly the items (a) and (b) in section 1 will be addressed in part through the four Bible studies which will be conducted during morning worship. We are making preparations for the worship to be indigenous as well as to focus and draw insights from the Assembly theme, "Called to Prophecy, Reconcile and Heal". The attempt is to inspire and motivate the participants and through

them, to motivate the member churches and councils to grasp the overall vision which comes out of the Assembly to be in mission, and to equip the churches to exercise a prophetic, reconciling and a healing ministry within their own constituencies and beyond.

In addition to the worship, there will be four participatory-oriented Bible studies conducted by four persons from the different regions of CCA in order to give the participatory and the regional balance which is also enshrined in the CCA Constitution. We have requested the four facilitators of the Bible studies to give a biblical exposition to the Assembly theme. They are assigned to conduct the studies on the words of the theme: "Called", "Prophecy", "Reconcile" and "Heal". We hope that the worship services and the Bible studies will be conducted in a manner that inspires and motivates people to go through a process of self criticism in order to affirm what is right, change what needs to be changed and let go what has to be discarded. We hope that the Word of God will challenge the participants to be faithful to the Word of God and go through a conversion experience.

In addition to formal worship and Bible studies, we have decided to set apart a room for prayer which will be kept open all the time during the Assembly for private prayer and meditation. In addition, we will also assign two persons (woman and man) to act as Chaplain/Counselor.

### The D. T. Niles Lectures

Two D. T. Niles Lectures will hopefully be a point where churches will be challenged to wrestle with the issues related to the Assembly theme. The first Lecture to be delivered by Dr. Preman Niles, son of D.T. Niles, will focus on the prophetic aspects of God's ministry and its implications for Christian witness and truth telling amidst forces of death and life denying forces. The speaker is also expected to give a biblical exposition on the prophetic movement during biblical times and state the mind of God in raising prophets and their challenge to the institutionalized religion which had become anti-God, anti-people and pro-Mammon.

Using this biblical model the speaker is also expected to challenge and expose the hypocrisy of the churches in Asia and call the churches to repentance and accountability, and to walk with God by identifying with people created in God's own image yet who have become 'no people'. To be with people who have become 'no people' is to identify with Jesus the broken and the crucified, and to challenge and call the ecclesia to become the authentic ecclesia of the oikoumene. This is the costly nature of discipleship and the challenge to the Church is to live according to its call and to be and become a credible witness to the Gospel amidst the brokenness of the world.

Hopefully, this lecture may also challenge and expose churches where they have become obstacles or are insensitive to ministries of reconciliation and healing, purely because of their captivity to cultic and institutional forms of ministry and their refusal to go beyond and embrace the pain of people which is also God's pain.

It is expected that the two speakers will provide a biblical, theological and a pastoral dimension to the churches to be the Church in Asia, and to provide the impetus to the churches to imitate the life and ministry of Jesus the Christ who called his followers to be his witnesses.



*Would you commit 'to make caring for creation a mission priority of the churches?' Cyclone Nargis victims in a stakeholders' meeting in Myanmar.*

The intention of the second D. T. Niles Lecture to be delivered by Dr. Ruth Manorama of India is to focus on the reconciling and healing aspects of God's ministry within the contexts of conflict and brokenness in Asia. The theme of this lecture is relevant for all of us who live in Asia. The speaker is expected to identify some crucial areas of conflict and the root causes for such conflicts. Additionally, the speaker is also expected to show the need for reconciliation which involves justice and mercy. Certainly, true reconciliation requires genuine repentance. The challenge for churches and religious communities is to accept it as a priority and find ways to be involved in such ministries for the healing of individuals, communities and nations.

### **Sermon at the Opening Worship**

When the Archbishop of Perth, Very Reverend Roger Herft delivers his sermon at the opening session he, too, will set the theological and biblical tone with a vision for the entire Assembly and empower the delegates to become prophets, reconcilers and healers. The Archbishop is expected to show the importance and the urgency for the Church which is called by God to be God's messengers to exercise the prophetic ministry by speaking the truth in love, exposing and unmasking the principalities and powers which try to play the role of God and deceive people. Furthermore, we also expect him bring in examples from Asia to show how our societies are broken and bleeding and need

reconciliation based on the principles of justice and healing undergirded by repentance.

We are also privileged to have the presence of Rev. Dr. Olav Fykse Tveit, the newly elected General Secretary of the WCC. We have requested him to deliver a Public Lecture on the theme "Called to Prophecy, Reconcile and Heal-An Ecumenical Perspective". This is an invitation to him to immerse in the turbulent waters of Asia and to spell out from a global perspective the implications of the theme and its challenges to the ecumenical movement. We hope his talk will challenge the parochialism of Asian Christians and in turn Asians will have an opportunity to challenge the mindset of the WCC.

### The Forums, the 'Hypothetical' and the Drama

Hopefully these discussions will provide those who participate at the Assembly to challenge and to be challenged, to listen and to speak, to learn and to unlearn and to vision new dreams and to let go captivity to enslaving traditions.

During the Forums the participants will be introduced to new subjects, issues or areas of major challenges with the help of resource persons to understand its implications/challenges to the people in Asia. These discussions and dialogues will provide opportunities to wrestle with new demands/challenges that Asia poses, and in turn to inject new ideas to the delegates so that they can

stretch their theological imagination to renew their vision and articulate a fresh theological vision for mission and faith formation within the context of Asia. The insights from these Forums will be brought to the plenary for further dialogue, discussion and formulation. The challenges and insights from these plenaries will serve as data or raw material for the program planning for the next five years until the Assembly in 2015.

The Hypothetical exercise is another opportunity to stretch one's mind and theological imagination and come to terms with God who is calling the Church to venture into new territories. It may also provide an opportunity for the Church to feel that it needs a new language, a new vision and daring spirit to discern God's presence as victim and judge amidst millions of suffering and struggling people.

This session will bring together a group of 7 to 8 experienced persons who are experts in their fields and who can engage on serious hypothetical but realistic issues and articulate clearly without a written script. The role of the Moderator is to engage them by posing some series of realistic mission/faith related questions for them to think and articulate answers or give insights so that the churches in Asia can come to understand and feel the urgency to revision its understanding of mission in Asia. Hopefully it will challenge us to go through a process of conversion.

*Would you 'commit to ministries of reconciliation undergirded by justice and healing with repentance...?'*

A local worship service in Timor Leste.

(Photo: Dominica Faurillo)



We are also making arrangements for a Drama Group to perform during an evening session. Communication is not merely through word but also through music, song, poetry, dance and silence. We hope that this theatre group will provide through a drama the challenges that the Asian context poses to the churches and thereby motivate the churches to discover the urgency to re-consider its understanding of mission and priorities for mission and witness.

Another crucial point during the Assembly is the space provided for Regional Workshops. During this time representatives from regions will discuss together issues they face and to articulate those issues through the thematic thrusts of the Assembly. This will provide the contextual basis for the programs CCA plans to propose for the next five years.

The events described above are designed to articulate an ecumenical vision for mission in the next five years under the overarching Assembly theme, "Called to Prophesy, Reconcile and Heal".

### To Review and Receive the Work of the Past

This portion of the schedule, item (c) in the CCA Constitution, will be handled at the Assembly when the reports of the outgoing Presidium, General Secretary, Program Reports and the CCA Review are taken for discussion. During these sessions the Assembly will be informed about the activities/programs carried out in partnership with member churches and councils. This particular aspect in the schedule should not be regarded merely as a matter of reporting or relaying of facts. It should be treated as a time together with member churches to reflect on the significance of equipping, accompanying and pooling human and financial resources with partner churches and struggling together to discern the presence of God who is also the God of surprises! It is also an opportunity to discuss openly the strengths and weaknesses of the ecumenical movement in Asia, and what steps and commitments should be made to make the ecumenical movement relevant and dynamic. It is also a time for churches to make renewed commitment to be in partnership with the ecumenical movement and become companions of it in partnership with God.



*Would you 'commit to the ecumenical movement in Asia and pledge of support for the work of ecumenism carried out by CCA'? Yun Jae-Hyang, CCA General Committee member with Kang Seo Goo during the AGAPE Consultation on Poverty, Wealth and Ecology in Asia and the Pacific, in November 2009. (Photo: Liza Lamis)*

Hence, past activities do not belong to the past alone but they also provide directions to the future which is always challenging and full of surprises. Therefore, receiving reports from the past should be considered as part of the process of accountability, stewardship and ownership. It is a time for honest dialogue and critique. It is also time to re-reflect with the member churches and grasp "the breadth and the strength, the height and the depth..."(Eph.3: 18) of God's mission in a complex continent like Asia. Finally, it should be looked upon as a time to repent and praise God.

### Elections and Future Responsibilities

This is also a crucial area of the Assembly where the Assembly elects leaders to carry forward the mission mandate of the Assembly for the next five years who will in turn come after five years and give an account of the work they have performed in partnership with member churches and councils and the Executive Staff.

Most of us are aware that a good deal of politics and arm twisting occurs to get people elected to various offices and committees. It is almost impossible to rule out such human activities. However, what should be kept in mind is to elect the right people with skills, gifts and charisma from one's country or another to positions within the ecumenical movement. The right selection of people is vital to carry out God's mission and witness in places where God has placed them. Sometimes this does not happen and therefore the ecumenical movement suffers and God's work is hindered.

In this context each individual should ask the question: am I the most suitable person in my country or region to take a responsible position within the ecumenical movement?

One should not be pushed into any position of responsibility without one's will or consent as these positions are set apart by God for women and men of integrity and spirituality. It is unfortunate that some of us tend to trivialize



*Would you commit to 'explore and experiment how to make the ecclesial presence in Asia indigenous to its context and relevant to the people it serves?' Children in Cambodia (Photo: Janejinda Pawadee)*

the spirituality and the integrity of a leader called to serve the ecumenical movement.

The recent evaluation carried out by CCA reveals some of these aspects expressed by members of constituent churches and councils. Therefore, the ecumenical movement in Asia needs the best from churches to give the best to God and God's work in Asia. If the ecumenical movement is weak or has no proper vision or leadership then all of us should take the responsibility for it. As in the past we need women, youth and men of character, credibility, vision and spirituality to guide the ecumenical movement and to do God's work amidst many challenges in Asia. We need prophets, reconcilers and healers who are immersed in a spirituality of self-giving and self-sacrificing to serve the ecumenical movement and in return to serve the churches in Asia. At the end we are all called to serve God who called prophets, reconcilers and healers to carry out God's own ministry.

### Statement of Affirmation of Faith

This is a short statement which will emerge out of the Assembly deliberations to be taken back to our churches to reflect on and re-enact. Hopefully it will contain elements of

confession, repentance, forgiveness, healing, reconciliation, affirmation and commitment. Churches may also be able to use this short statement to enlighten their members on issues related to God's mission in Asia and to explain to them what God expects from them in terms of prophetic, reconciling and healing ministries.

### Acts of Celebration and Solidarity

The Assembly is a place where we tell our stories, celebrate our achievements and also confess our sins. It is also a place to meet old friends and to start new relationships. It is a place to bond with one another and pledge to each other to accompany them in joy, sorrow and through all the changing scenes of life. The Assembly is also a place to transcend barriers of race, class, caste, ideology and gender and language superiority and embrace one another as one in Christ. It is a place to witness to and thank God for God's graciousness and compassion in spite of human sin and callousness. The Assembly is also a place to start a new beginning for the renewal of God's creation and saving the entire creation in partnership with God and humanity.

### Pre-Assemblies

In a sense one may argue that Pre-Assemblies are not a part of the main Assembly and that is the reason they are not included within the main Assembly agenda. The answer is yes and no. On one hand, it is not a part of the Assembly deliberations. On the other hand, it influences the Assembly deliberations. The fact that there is a place to present a short and a precise report from each of the Pre-Assemblies at a plenary session is a recognition given to Pre-Assemblies that they are a part of the Assembly.

Additionally, more than one third of the participants of the Pre-Assembly will also attend the general assembly and some will be delegates. A few delegates are selected before hand from the total number of delegates and invited to participate in the proceedings of the Pre-Assemblies. This methodology also provides a link between Pre-Assemblies and the main Assembly. In fact, the expectation is that the few delegates are expected to share the insights from Pre-assemblies to enrich the discussions and debates in the Assembly when and where necessary.

We are also aware that most of those who come as delegates to the General Assembly are institutional Church-oriented persons. Of course, they are important to the life of the Church and to the ecumenical movement. However, we also need to acknowledge that at these Assemblies a large section of people who are outside the bureaucracy of the institutional Church, who are known to be the 'sinned against' or the minjung, peasants and those who are immersed in the suffering people are missing and their experiences and voices are often absent in Assembly debates. Therefore, Pre-Assemblies are set up by CCA in the last number of years to bring such

people together and provide them a forum to express their pains, struggles, victories and defeats. It is a forum provided to unmask the principalities and powers and name the idols which try to pass as off instruments of the life-giving God. These Pre-Assemblies are a life-giving component to the main Assembly and they should be taken as Forums where the voice of prophecy is proclaimed and the urgency for reconciliation with justice and healing with repentance is advocated.

Rienzie Perera

### Expected Outcomes

- A renewed commitment by the churches and councils to the ecumenical movement in Asia and pledge of support for the work of ecumenism carried out by CCA
- A renewed commitment by the churches to strive towards Christian unity, solidarity and to overcome human made barriers which deny the opportunity to take part at the same Eucharistic table
- A commitment by the churches to provide necessary financial and human resources for the self-sufficiency of CCA
- Support and solidarity from the churches to the work of human rights advocacy in Asia
- Support from churches to provide sanctuary and solidarity for those who are being persecuted because of their prophetic words, action and identification
- Clearly defined ministries of reconciliation undergirded by justice and healing with repentance, se
- rving as a central thrust of God's mission entrusted to the Church
- A Commitment by churches to overcome the sin of patriarchy, violence against women and children
- A full embrace of a spirituality of simplicity, self emptying and voluntary poverty
- A commitment to make caring for creation a mission priority of the churches
- A commitment by the churches to advocate for a community, country, region and a world free of arms and nuclear weapons
- A recognition that the God revealed in the Bible is the God of the entire creation and to be mindful of that biblical principle when relating to people of diverse religious and ideological persuasions
- A commitment by the churches to overcome unjust structures, where necessary in partnership with people of different regions and ideologies, which keep millions of people created in God's image in perpetual poverty and misery
- A commitment by the churches to empower communities, groups and individuals who are involved in struggles to overcome sins of racism, classism and casteism
- A commitment by the churches to explore and experiment how to make the ecclesial presence in Asia indigenous to its context and relevant to the people it serves
- A clearly defined mission where Jesus the Christ is the focal point and from it is drawn the inspiration for Christian witness and evangelism in Asia

# Pre-Assembly Forums

## Forum of PLHIV+ and Asian Theological Reflection on HIV and AIDS



Naw She Wah from Myanmar. Positive and a widow, she is Project Officer of the Myanmar Positive Group. Naw She Wah shares the grace of healing and forgiveness to her HIV+ sisters and brothers.

### Description

The Pre-Assembly of People Living with HIV+ and Asian Theological Reflection Process on HIV and AIDS will bring together key affected populations, people living with HIV+, faith-based organizations, church leaders, lay leaders and theologians to engage each other in frank and constructive dialogue on vulnerability and risk factors in HIV and AIDS, stigma and discrimination, protection of human rights and human dignity, mutual accountability, access to whole range of care and support, building HIV Competent Churches and meaningful participation of people living with HIV and AIDS and key affected population in faith based organizations and church activities.

**Venue and dates:** Dynasty Hotel, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia  
10 (arrival) -14 (departure) April 2010

### Objectives

- To share insights on the challenges of HIV and AIDS for Asia in the second decade of this millennium
- To listen to the stories of the most affected and vulnerable people, and reflect on their contributions to the Asian theology on AIDS
- To share strategies and skills that work to eliminate stigma and discrimination and promotes healing and reconciliation
- To review CCA's past contribution towards an Asian theology of health, healing and wholeness and to determine new challenges and way forward to

enhance the involvement of theological institutions, pastors and priests and church workers to support people living with HIV+

- To urge the mutual accountability of church leaders, churches, and church-related institutions to statements and commitments that have been made.

### Contents

- Overview of Situation and Challenges of HIV and AIDS in Asia, Personal Testimonies of Key Affected Populations and PLHIV+, Contribution of Faith Based Organizations,
- Skills Building Sessions on Building HIV Competent Churches, Practical Ways of working with PLHIV+ and Key Affected Population, HIV Competent Churches and Theological Education in Asia, Theology and AIDS, Healing of Memories
- Harm Reduction Strategies
- Exposure Visits to AIDS programs in Kuala Lumpur, Biblico Theological Reflection on Human Sexuality and HIV and AIDS
- Joint Plenary with the Women's Forum
- Developing a statement to present to the 13th General Assembly of CCA
- Meeting with Mekong countries

### .Participants

- Key affected population, vulnerable people
- Faith-based organizations working on HIV and AIDS
- Pastors and theologians
- Partner organizations (United Nations agencies in Asia, World Council of Churches, Lutheran World Federation, United Evangelical Mission, and Malaysian AIDS organizations)

### Expected outcomes

- Statement to be Addressed to the 13th CCA General Assembly
- Asian contribution towards Building HIV Competent Churches/Faith Based Organizations
- Asian Theology on AIDS, Follow up of Integration of HIV Curriculum in Theological Education
- Sharing of Resources on HIV and AIDS
- Planning for the project on Building HIV Competent Churches in the Mekong Region

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# The People's Forum

## Description

The People's Forum is a continuing dialogue between churches and people's movements aimed at challenging the perspectives and priorities of mission in the ecumenical movement. It can be a venue where the voices of those who continue to be marginalized and oppressed by power, position, class, ethnicity, ideology and prejudice.

Venue and dates: Dynasty Hotel, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia  
11(arrival) -14 (departure) April 2010

## Objectives

- to be a venue for creative dialogue between churches and movements and to draw implications for the churches' mission among the broken, bruised and brutalized people and communities to initiate a network among churches and movements where it does not exist and to renew and strengthen existing networks
- to work out an Action Plan enabling churches at national and regional levels to work together in solidarity to overcome forces that divide and suppress people's rights
- to bring out a Forum Statement identifying the principalities and powers which are denying life to people and challenging the churches to focus on mission that affirms their witness to Jesus Christ who said, "I have come so that they may have life and have it to the full" (John 10:10).

## Contents

- Worship and biblical reflections on discipleship and Asian realities
- Displacement, migration and refugees
- Ecological justice, ecotourism and alternatives to globalization
- Mission and solidarity with the poor
- Conflicts and culture of impunity
- Nuclear disarmament, peace and security

## Participants

- Members of CCA Justice, International Affairs, Development and Service Program Cluster
- Assembly delegates
- non-voting delegates invited as resource persons

## Expected Outcomes

Program direction towards strengthening ecumenical networks in human rights and peace building, ecological justice, and migrant workers to assist Assembly public issues committee; and to identify future directions and program foci for JID.

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Hearing the voices from the margins. A Korean comfort woman sharing her story before the Article 9 Conference demonstrators. (Photo: Carlos Ocampo)

## Asia Ecumenical Course 2010

### Description

The Asian Ecumenical Course (AEC) is the annual ecumenical formation program of the Christian Conference of Asia. Since 1976, it has been carried out for second-line or younger leaders of CCA member churches and national councils. Its four components are: (a) Asian realities, (b) ecumenical vision, (c) community building, and (d) leadership training. In this assembly year, AEC participants will have some time together prior to the Assembly for community building, leadership training, analysis of Asian realities and inputs on the wider ecumenical vision. This will be held at the Seminari Theoloji Malaysia (STM) in Seremban. Then participants will move to Kuala Lumpur to attend the CCA General Assembly as observers and animators of the daily worship.

**Venue and dates:** Seminari Theologi Malaysia  
Hotel Grand Seasons, Kuala Lumpur,  
Malaysia  
8 (arrival) - 22 (departure) April 2010

### Objective

To equip younger generation of leaders with a wider ecumenical perspective that shall enable them to

their churches' prophetic, reconciling and healing ministry, highlighting strengths and weaknesses, obstacles and their attempts at overcoming them

- Biblical-theological reflections and presentations on the theme
- Workshops on the use of arts (music, theater arts) in prophetic, reconciling and healing ministry of the church
- Sharing of faith journeys - part of community building
- Immersion in and analysis of Malaysian and Asian realities
- Preparing of action plans on how to take back their learning

### Participants

Twenty (20) participants nominated by CCA member churches or their seminaries or church offices with skills and interests in singing and drama in public worship.

### Expected outcome

Participants with a wider ecumenical vision and stronger



Younger ecumenical leaders gain a wider ecumenical perspective through the AEC. The 2009 AEC in Kolkata, India.

participate in the prophetic witness and reconciling and healing ministry of the church in Asia.

commitment to ecumenism and who will then share this vision to their communities.

### Contents

- Pre-AEC assignment: critical case studies of

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## The Youth Pre-Assembly Forum

Bring in the voices  
and gifts of the young!  
Youth at the National  
Ecumenical Youth  
Assembly in January  
2010 in Kolkata, India.



### Description

CCA is committed to nurturing the leadership potential of the youth for the ecumenical ministry in Asia, and to providing opportunities and avenues within the ecumenical movement to enable the youth to actively participate in, and contribute their gifts and voices to the ecumenical movement. The youth pre-assembly forum is a venue where they young can discuss issues confronting them. Additionally, the forum provides the opportunity for the youth delegates to prepare themselves for the CCA assembly, and to define the future directions of the CCA youth program in the next five years. It is also a unique occasion for the assembly Stewards to gain ecumenical exposure and basic honing of skills to effectively assist in the smooth conduct of the CCA assembly.

**Venue and dates:** Hotel Grand Seasons, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia  
10 (arrival) -13 (departure) April 2010

### Objectives

- To facilitate discussions on current and emerging issues confronting the youth in Asia, and bring the voice of the youth to the Assembly
- To provide ecumenical formation and training for youth stewards, and orient them on the CCA Assembly theme
- To prepare a youth statement for presentation to the assembly,
- to focus the direction of the ecumenical youth movement in the next five years
- To renew and strengthen old bonds and build

new ones in the youth movements among CCA's membership

- To help revive ecumenism within the host country, Malaysia.

### Contents

- Theological reflections
- Lectures and group discussions on the Assembly theme
- Panel presentation and plenary discussion
- Planning and drafting of statement
- Community building

### Participants

- Youth Voting Delegates
- Assembly Stewards
- Observers

### Expected Outcomes

- Youth Statement to be presented to the Assembly
- Youth delegates who are prepared and informed on both protocols and issues during the Assembly sessions
- Stewards who have undergone basic ecumenical formation and training to assist in the Assembly as stewards
- Focused direction of the ecumenical youth movement

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## The Women's Pre-Assembly Forum

We cannot afford not to be partners as women and men. Participants at the Asian School for Gender Justice in September 2009.



### Description

The Women's Forum will bring together 70 women church leaders around Asia and some church men leaders in solidarity with women to promote gender justice under the theme "Celebrating Life: Asian Women Prophets, Healers and Reconcilers." A few women leaders from other faith communities are also invited to enrich the discussion and to find a common thread which binds women together irrespective of religious, class, ethnic and ideological barriers. The forum will also help in preparing women delegates to actively and meaningfully participate in the CCA Assembly deliberations.

**Venue and Dates:** Dynasty Hotel, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia  
10 (arrival) -13 (P.M. departure) April 2010

### Objectives

- To raise the prophetic voices, peace building skills of Asian women and their contributions to building prophetic communities of peace.
- To strengthen the Asian women's ecumenical movement in its task to promote gender justice in church and society.
- To draw up action plans and strategies to promote Asian church women's involvement in decision making processes of the church and society, and to develop women's leadership in building sustainable and prophetic communities
- To explore theologies of positive masculinity and spirituality, and promote men and youth involvement in promoting gender justice.

### Contents

- Bible studies (Asian spirituality and theology, theology of positive masculinity)
- Panel presentation and discussions (Called to be Prophets of peace, Called to be Reconcilers and Healers, Joint Plenary with the PLWHIV+ Forum)
- Creative Workshops and Dialogues (Healing Memories, Brokenness to Healing), Restore Broken Relationships, Theology of Positive Masculinity, Living Together and Working Towards Just Peace
- Exposure program
- Story telling sessions
- Planning and Strategizing

### Participants

- Women voting delegates
- Resource Persons and Guests
- Ecumenical Partners

### Expected Outcomes

- Increased visibility of Asian Church women's involvement in decision making process of Church and ecumenical organizations in building prophetic communities.
- Strengthened networking and solidarity among Asian church women engaged in prophetic mission as healers and reconcilers
- Asian Church leader's involvement in promoting gender justice
- Some articulations on theologies of positive masculinity and Asian Spirituality

**Contact details** for more information: [moumita@cca.org.hk](mailto:moumita@cca.org.hk)

# Worship and Bible Studies

**W**orship and Bible Studies are a very vital part in the life and work of the Christian Conference of Asia. They help to remind us of our need for God and our need to constantly discern the word of God for our lives in these times.

In preparation for this 13th General Assembly, fifteen Bible studies have been prepared on the theme for use by the CCA member churches and councils. They have been published in a special GA edition of the CTC Bulletin and on the CCA website ([www.cca.org.hk](http://www.cca.org.hk)) so churches can prepare themselves for the assembly by studying and reflecting together on the implications of the theme upon their lives and ministries.

The liturgies and four Bible studies at the General Assembly will focus on the GA theme, "Called to Prophesy, Reconcile and Heal." The opening worship speaker on the theme will be Archbishop Roger Herft (Australia). The daily worship will include a Bible study on each of the sub-themes by the following Bible study enablers: "Called", Very Rev. Pamela Tankersley (Aotearoa New Zealand); "Prophesy", Rev. Dr. Hyunju Bae (Korea); "Reconcile", Metropolitan G Mor Coorilos (India); and "Heal", Rev. Dennis Raj (Malaysia). These sub-themes have also shaped the liturgies and symbols that the GA worship committee has prepared - e.g. lotus pods and flowers, clay pots (broken and mended), water, coconuts.

Three Assembly songs have been composed for this 13th General Assembly: "Out of Strange Unlikely Places" by Shirley Erena Murray (Aotearoa New Zealand) and Lim Swee Hong (Singapore); "God Calls Us All" by Luna Dingayan and Perla Dingayan (Philippines); and "Lord, We Pray" by Noriel Capulong and Jean Cuanan-Nalam

(Philippines).

In order to make worship in this assembly celebratory, participatory and meaningful, we have invited the delegations to bring some symbols and their own musical instruments. Aside from singing and learning songs and hymns from Asia, we will also sing some of the old hymns and songs that churches are more familiar with - especially using versions of the lyrics that are more contextual, inclusive, and theologically sound. There will also be time and space for singing action songs and choruses - for we shall indeed praise our God with our whole being!

Drama presentations (street theater) will also form part of the liturgy - these are to mirror to us some aspects of our life, and thereby calling our attention to the need for confession and renewal of commitment.

The seating arrangement around the round tables in the assembly hall will provide us with a good opportunity to build communities as we worship and study the Word of God together and as we deliberate on the life and work of CCA for the next five years.

Hope S. Antone

Bible Studies are available online ([www.cca.org.hk](http://www.cca.org.hk)), and are published in the CTC Bulletin, Volume XXV, Number 3 (December 2009)

Deliberating on the life and work of CCA is a form of worship itself. The AEC 2010 will help animate worship services and Bible Study sessions. The AEC 2009 participants in Kolkata, India.



## Gender justice in the grassroots

“Can a Cambodian Christian be a feminist?”

This is the question posed by Rev. Oum Sovy, chair of the Kampuchea Christian Council (KCC) to the participants of the Gender Justice Training in Phnom Penh, Cambodia on February 24 to 26, 2010. Sixteen women and eight men - composed of youth, women, church leaders and pastors - attended the training conducted by KCC in partnership CCA and the Mekong Ecumenical Partnership Program (MEPP).

“Even though some participants do not know how to read and write, they actively participated. They were eager to understand more about gender justice,” shared Janejinda Pawadee, MEPP Coordinator.

### Asian Feminism

Rev. Oum Sovy highlighted the need for the Cambodian church leaders to be peace builders and agents of gender justice. He quoted Galatians 3:8 to justify the role of church leaders in promoting the understanding that both men and women are equal in spiritual blessings and rights to life and dignity. “Asian Christian Feminism should promote life in its fullness for women, men and children,” he further added.

### Local Contribution

Self reliance was evident in the local contributions, which is not always in terms of money and dollars. Cambodian church leaders offered their hard work and labour. The women and youth jointly facilitated some of the training activities, volunteered to prepare food and run some errands and gave their precious time. The Children Vision Center supported by the Korea Ministry Support Center (KMSC) provided accommodation on a subsidized price.

A woman and man team resource persons came from the Lutheran World Federation

(LWF) based in Cambodia to facilitate the training together with some executive Committee members of KCC. Topics and activities included sexual equality, gender and HIV and AIDS, gender and health, gender and economics, exposure to a red-light district and visit to an NGO working on trafficking issues, and biblical and theological reflections.

### Men and women partnership

This is the first time that KCC is conducting a gender justice training for both women and men according to Prak Saravy, Women’s



Secretary of KCC. Samnang Douk, KCC Youth Secretary, said that Rev. Sovy's challenge helped participants appreciate more the important partnership of men and women in building inclusive communities. CCA always encourages member churches and councils to engage in gender justice training for both women and men. Partnership is crucial in building inclusive communities of peace.

**Ripple effect**

The training is a 'ripple effect' of the Asian School of Ecumenical Formation of Gender

Justice (ASEF-GJ), an intensive training of trainers conducted by CCA in September 2009 especially for church leaders from the Mekong Region and East Timor. Aimed to provide grassroots leaders a venue for sharing, learning and enhancing capacities to advance gender justice, the training helped participants to recover values that promote and uphold fullness of life for all especially for women, and to reinterpret scripture from an inclusive perspective.

Moumita Biswas and Janejinda Pawadee



*Gender justice is about being gender fair and inclusive. Training participants.*

## A world free of nuclear weapons

turn swords into ploughshares, bullets into bells

**H**wacheon is a little place with a big vision (Peace Council Meets at DMZ, by M. Virginia Swisher), which lies in the northern region of South Korea just below the Demilitarized Zone. This village witnessed the most intense fighting during the Korean War, and its population has good reason to know the meaning and value of peace.

Hwacheon County played host to a group of ecumenical peace advocates from Canada, Fiji, Korea, Norway, Pakistan, the Philippines and the USA, who met on December 4 to 6 to seek ways of strengthening the ecumenical movement for urgent action on nuclear disarmament reaching out to other faith communities.

The Conference started with a hopeful note towards nuclear disarmament, with President Obama's call for a nuclear weapon free world in Prague, followed by a resolution of the UN Security Council's Special Session and statements by prominent persons. However, this call will be taken as just another round in the disarmament discourse unless concrete steps towards disarmament are taken that will lend credibility to these recent exhortations and statements.

Major institutional and political obstacles to nuclear disarmament include the lack of effective international disarmament machinery, the secrecy and obfuscation in nuclear affairs and the need for transparency and accountability, the lack of willingness and ability of the nuclear weapon states for nuclear disarmament, and the steep imbalances between perceived adversaries in conventional military strength. All these continue to frustrate nuclear disarmament.

The Korean peninsula, the people of the Pacific states, India and Pakistan in South Asia, the peace talks in the Middle East continue to be threatened by the presence of nuclear weapons in varying degrees.

The impact of the US nuclear doctrines in the use of nuclear weapons in claims to prevent wars and in its national missile defense program, the rise of a techno-nuclear complex that militates against participatory democracy, the strong links between patriarchy and nuclear power, the great human suffering in the aftermath of nuclear bombs that fell in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the negative impact on ecology and climate changes, and the negative consequences of nuclear weaponry on people's economic, social and political security all point to an urgent need to a renewed commitment to nuclear disarmament.

Ecumenical commitment to nuclear disarmament was sounded at the inaugural Assembly of the World Council of Churches in 1948, calling for the abolition of nuclear weapons as weapons of mass and indiscriminate destruction endangering humanity and the whole creation. Churches worldwide through the WCC, have maintained a consistent stand on the elimination of nuclear weapons within the framework of a broader commitment to living "without resort to arms" and to seeking peace with justice and with respect for the integrity or creation.

The 1983 WCC Assembly in Vancouver, in a statement on Peace and Justice endorsing the conviction of the Panel on the Public Hearing on Nuclear Disarmament (1981) declared;

**"The nuclear issue is in its impact and thrust to humanity a question of Christian discipline and faithfulness to the Gospel".**

The concept of shared human security is a reference point for ecumenical policies and programs that address critical transnational issues defining the 21st century, - climate change, the twin crises of chronic impoverishment and endemic over-consumption, and the nuclear threat.



Conference participants at the Peace Bell Park

The Conference was organized jointly by the Asia Pacific Graduate School and Korean YMCA, with the support of the National Council of Churches in Korea (NCCK), the Presbyterian Church in Korea (PCK), the Christian Conference of Asia (CCA) and the World Council of Churches (WCC). Outgoing WCC General Secretary, the Rev. Dr. Samuel Kobia presented the WCC Perspectives and Engagement in Nuclear Disarmament at the Conference. Fifteen theologians and academics from Korea participated in the consultation, which received very warm welcome and hospitality from the Mayor of Hwacheon County. Charlie Ocampo of CCA joined the non-Korean delegation of Dr. Jonathan Frerichs, WCC; Dr. Ernie Regehr, Project Ploughshares Canada; Prof. Junaid Ahmad, Lahore University of Management

Sciences, Pakistan; Ms Rejeli Tupou Vere, Pacific Concerns Resource Centre, Fiji; Rev. John Jones, South-North Network Norway; and Dr. Samuel Kobia, WCC.

The gathering in Hwacheon issued The Hwacheon Call, addressed to the ecumenical community, its worldwide and regional organizations, member churches and those willing to cooperate in the active pursuit of a world of peace - a world free of nuclear weapons.

The Hwacheon Call, "For a World of Peace: A World Free of Nuclear Weapons", issued in Hwacheon, Korea, on 6th December 2009, is available at [www.cca.org.hk](http://www.cca.org.hk)

Charlie Ocampo

## Saying no to militarism



Religious leaders at a public prayer during the Article 9 Second Conference.

**E**ighty-seven (87) religious leaders representing Buddhist, Christian and Muslim faith communities gathered at the Christian Academy House, hosted by the Presbyterian Church in the Republic of Korea (PROK) on December 1-3, 2009. It was the second conference for peace advocates supporting the Article 9 Movement in Japan. Reports on developments in Japan and the rest of East Asia, stories of communities affected by the presence and actions by military forces were shared.

From the shared reflections, the following insights came to light: 1) Supporting Article 9 has helped religious communities to re-learn what it means to be living their faith in an area of public concern; b) support for Article 9 has created new bonds of solidarity among religions and peace advocates; 3) Japan needs to move beyond its “One National Peace Identity” to the joint building of regional peace with its neighbors; 4) Article 9 invites people of the region to promote a fuller understanding of peace based on the “right to a peaceful existence”; and 5) Countries that have waged war on their neighbors have to make right with their neighbors in order to build lasting peace.

Among the resolutions passed by the Conference to advance the spirit of Article 9 include undertaking more vigorous cross-generational peace education to include exposure programs, inter-religious dialogues and the training of peace education facilitators

and advocates using creative media; to expand the peace network in countries experiencing conflict and violence (Philippines, Myanmar, Sri Lanka, Pakistan, Indonesia); to support all efforts for reunification in the Korean Peninsula, and to recommend the inclusion of the Article 9 campaign in the Ecumenical Advocacy Day in Washington DC (March 2010) and the International Ecumenical Peace Convocation in Kingston, Jamaica (2011).

The Conference delegates expressed their solidarity with the comfort women who were rendered victims of sexual slavery and racial discrimination during the course of World War II, by holding a demonstration in front of the US Embassy in Seoul, with singing, solidarity messages, and listening to stories of courage from a number of comfort women.

The Mission Statement of the Article 9 International Working Group was also approved at the Conference, which can be accessed at [www.cca.org.hk](http://www.cca.org.hk).

The Rev. Kwon Oh Sung was overall convener of the Conference. The Rev. Shin Seung Min from PROK; Rev. Frank Hernando, ecumenical co-worker from the United Church of Christ in the Philippines (UCCP) to PROK; Sister Filo Hirota, Justice and Peace Council in Rome; and Charlie Ocampo from CCA composed the Conference Secretariat.

Charlie Ocampo

# Joint FABC and CCA Staff Meeting

The path to full visible unity of the Church in Asia is arduous and never easy. After some time of hiatus, the once robust ecumenical and collaborative work between the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences (FABC) and CCA comes to life again.

In search for a fuller visible unity of the Church in Asia, CCA and FABC called for the formation of the AEC in 1993. In the following years, CCA and FABC were able to organize two seminars on the Asian Movement for Christian Unity (AMCU). The first CCA-FABC regional Ecumenical Course took place in September 1999. FABC was well represented in the Asian Congress of Theologians (CATS I and II), and have participated in the Asian Ecumenical Course conducted by CCA.

The AEC had regular meetings until the year 2006 to follow through the concrete measures it has put forward to increase collaboration work between CCA and FABC. The last joint CCA and FABC staff meeting

was in 2001.

Nine years thereafter, the next Joint FABC and CCA Staff Meeting took place on February 20, 2010, at the St. Louis Hospital in Bangkok, Thailand. The meeting aimed to revive and sustain a more committed collaboration between CCA and FABC. While we continue praying for a visible unity of the Church in Asia to be realized, we also take concrete steps to help bring it about.

The participants agreed to affirm and revive the intent of the Asian Ecumenical Committee (AEC), which was jointly created by both CCA and FABC to further promote ecumenism in Asia. Joint programs such as the AMCU and CATS will be sustained, joint staff meetings regularized, and communication lines between office and program counterparts of both organizations revived and firm up.

The next joint staff meeting is projected to take place in January 2011 in Bangkok, Thailand.

Liza Lamis



FABC and CCA leaders and staff

## Church leaders support peace talks



Members of the PEPP Core Group

Archbishop Antonio J. Ledesma and Ms Sharon Rose Joy Ruiz-Duremdes opened the First Assembly of the Philippine Ecumenical Peace Platform (PEPP) with a hopeful note that the churches, both Roman Catholic and Protestant, will stay their course in a commitment to support the resumption of peace talks between the Government of the Republic of the Philippines (GRP) and the National Democratic Front (NDF). "We will never succumb to weak resignation, and with victory before us, we will rise and conquer".

Forty-five (45) bishops and members of clergy representing the Catholic and Protestant churches, members of PEPP, met for the first time at the Brokenshire Convention Center in Davao City on 11-13 February 2010. The assembly affirmed the principles of a just and lasting peace, which include respect for human dignity and equality, respect for human life, the promotion of human life and the common good, that public authorities are subject to God's moral order, and the promotion of peace and solidarity.

The efforts to bring both the GRP and the NDF before the negotiating table have been a long and circuitous process. Among past agreements signed by both parties include the Joint Agreement on Safety, Security and Immunity Guarantees (JASSIG) under the Aquino Government; and the Comprehensive Agreement on Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law (CAHRIHL) signed under the present Government of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo. Agreements in the field of social and economic rights and political and

constitutional changes are still very much the agenda for the future before the final stage of cessation of hostilities and disposition of forces are agreed upon.

The Davao Assembly is a step further in a series of regional consultations and workshops on peace building in the Philippines. Five representatives from the Norwegian churches which included Bishop Helga Byfuglien, representing the Christian Council of Norway attended the Assembly, representing the Norwegian Ecumenical Peace Platform (NEPP), which continues to provide support for the peace talks. Mr. Carlos Ocampo from Christian Conference of Asia (CCA) attended the Assembly as an observer representing Churches in Asia.

The PEPP is composed of members from the Association of Major Religious Superiors in the Philippines (AMRSP), the Catholic Bishops Conference in the Philippines (CBCP), the Ecumenical Bishops Forum (EBF), the National Council of Churches in the Philippines (NCCP) and the Philippine Conference of Evangelical Churches (PCEC).

On the 6th of February before the PEPP Assembly, forty-three health workers were arrested while attending a training seminar in Morong, Rizal. There were reports of torture and the families were denied full visitation rights. The detainees have since been shown in court after a writ of habeas corpus hearing at the Court of First Instance in Manila.

The arrest has sparked a flurry of condemnation, support and solidarity from churches and human rights advocates from the WCC, CCA, the World Student Christian Federation and other international organizations.

Military operations including arrest without a warrant and subjecting detainees to torture under interrogation bring to the fore the urgency why PEPP needs to continue its active role and advocacy for peaceful solution to the on-going conflict in the Philippines. PEPP church leaders affirm with a resounding voice their role in the Philippine peace process - "Opus solidaritatis pacisque".

Charlie Ocampo

# Interfaith groups gather for peace

Indonesia-USA Interfaith Cooperation Conference, an inter-religious gathering took place in Jakarta, Indonesia on January 25-27, 2010. Religions for Peace, the world's largest multi-religious coalition for peace, facilitated the holding of the Conference. More than 100 participants from different faiths, think-tank and, civil society organizations and scholars from Indonesia, USA, Japan, Cambodia, Philippines, Thailand, Malaysia and Sri Lanka attended.

The Conference was one of the steps undertaken by the US government to promote and foster multi-religious cooperation since President Barak Obama's historical speech in Cairo, Egypt in June 2009. Indonesia, the biggest Muslim country, was chosen as the location for this new initiative.

In Cairo, President Obama said:

**"I have come here to seek a new beginning between the United States and Muslims around the world; one based upon mutual interest and mutual respect; and based upon the truth that America and Islam are not exclusive, and need not be in competition. Instead, they overlap, and share common principles- principles of justice and progress; tolerance and the dignity of all human beings."**

The Minister for Foreign Affairs, H. E. Dr. R. M. Marty M. Natalegawa officially opened the conference at the Pancasila Mansion,

Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia. At the ceremony, Foreign Minister Natalegawa also launched a book, "Insight Indonesia: The Perspective of Americans" (?), a collection of writings about Indonesia by American prominent leaders, such as Former US State Secretary Henry Kissinger and some members of the US Congress.

In this Conference, Religions for Peace took the opportunity to raise mutual understanding and level of sensitivity of people of different faiths living side by side.

All religions were called to join in efforts at finding ways to work together in empowering the moderates, in confronting negative stereotypes, and in promoting harmony among civilizations. Alleviating poverty protecting the environment, promoting education on religious diversity and the common good, and advancing good governance are areas where faith communities need to enhance their collaboration.

Dr. Prawate Khid-arn, CCA General Secretary, represented the Christian Conference of Asia in the Conference, which served to reinforce the role of Christians and other faith communities in promoting world peace and reconciliation in communities and organizations. CCA is committed to accompany its member churches and Councils in their respective contexts dealing with conflicts and peace initiatives.

Prawate Khid-arn



A panel discussion at the Conference

## Listening to women's stories

# A call on International Women's Day

### Kalpna Chakma, Bangladeshi

**T**wenty-three year old Kalpna Chakma is an indigenous woman, daughter of a farmer, of the Chittagong hill tribe in Bangladesh. She was abducted on 12 June 1996 from her home and is still missing and feared to have been killed. Kalpna had been vehemently criticizing Bangladeshi military repression and harassments of indigenous people, especially the women. She was engaged in advocacy for the emancipation of the Jumma indigenous women from being tortured by the Bangladesh military. Forced marriage and abduction on the part of the military is a ploy to force the integration of indigenous women into the mainstream society. This inhuman practice continues today in Bangladesh.

### Iron Lady of Manipur, India

Sharmila Irom is a 34 years old grassroots woman activist in Manipur, India called the 'Iron Lady' because of her iron-like determination to 'fast unto death' in pursuit of peace and justice for the victims of the Indian Government's Armed Forces Special Forces

Power Act (AFSPA). Sharmila has pledged from November 2004 to protest against the violation of human rights and the immense power and impunity by the Indian army in arbitrarily arresting, detaining and killing civilians. Their victims are mostly young people and women in Manipur and other parts of India.

In 2004, Thanjam Monorama a young woman was abducted, raped, killed and her body left in streets as a public warning to Manipuri women and mothers protesting against custodial rape and summary killing. The mothers in rage, tore off their clothes in front of Army officers, beating their chests and shouting: 'rape us before you rape our daughter. Stop killing innocent people. Remove the AFSPA from Manipur.' Sharmila has been fasting for justice to women since then.

### Just a handful of rice

Mizo women in the Presbyterian Church of Mizoram played a crucial role in fund raising through their project, 'Handful of

Who will hear our stories? Participants creating a 'circle of peace' - also a safe space for telling stories - at the Asian School for Gender Justice in September 2009.



Rice'. Every day these women would set aside a handful of rice in a jar before cooking and then would sell the grains collected to support the Church and its various activities. The women's yearly collection from this project was huge. Historically, this project was initiated in support of Bible women. In the Mizoram Presbyterian Church as early as 1913, the Bible women were trained as spiritual healers, given nursing training and practical household skills including crafts, sewing, weaving, and knitting. They traveled to villages teaching women and engaging in healing ministry. In 1958, the 21 Bible women were dismissed from service. The introduction of Bible women at a very early stage of history of Christianity in Mizoram showed the recognition of women in ministry and their acceptance in Mizo society. Dr. Rini Ralte, a Presbyterian missionary confessed how painful the dismissal of Bible women has been and how difficult it has become for women to be ordained in the Presbyterian Church of Mizoram.

### Celebrating International Women's Day

The above are just a few untold stories of heroism and commitment of women in building communities of peace in every society. As we celebrate the 100th anniversary of International Women's Day (IWD) it is very important that Asian churches uphold and affirm the significance of IWD by recognizing women's contributions in realizing and protecting their rights and making efforts to put a stop on the violence against women in our societies.

### Breaking their silence

Dr Prawate Khid-arn, CCA General Secretary, said in a statement that 'though gender violence is committed in many countries, in many conservative societies in Asia it has not even been considered an issue until recently and remains a taboo subject for public discussion. Asian Churches also need to confess that many times it remains silent about violence committed against women, domestic violence within families even of members of congregations, and discrimination within the Church.' Aside from women being kept from decision making



Women's work: unrecognized, unpaid or underpaid, and undervalued. (Photo: Shona Thangavel)

processes in the Church, there is also the often mistaken notion that gender justice is the agenda for women only and a lack of education of both men and women together in partnership.

Dr. Khid-arn also reminds us that the 100th anniversary of IWD is an important day for the Asian Churches to renew their commitment to take action, initiate policies, engage in advocacy and campaign to promote greater involvement by women in public life as well as in making decisions in the Church. There is a need to strengthen ecumenical formation training in gender justice for women as well as men. CCA and Asian churches need to engage in social and legal programs that give women protection from violence, promote social change, and encourage more equitable sharing of domestic responsibilities.

As Asian Christians offer genuine solidarity with women we affirm our faith in Jesus Christ who showed us the way to building just and peaceful communities of women and men.

Moumita Biswas

## Accompanying the migrant workers

### A theological challenge to churches

**M**igration is intertwined with the history of humankind. Hunger, malnutrition, and death, effects of climate change, violence, war, sexual exploitation and human rights violations force people to leave their families, friends and their own countries. They cross international borders in affluent countries, which are often closed to those who are forced to migrate. Illegal migrants end up either spending long years in prison or in squalid refugee camps.

The churches in Europe are responding to migration under three areas of concern, namely: a) migration as opportunity and challenge for the unity of the Church; b) migration as an opportunity for churches'

witness; and, c) migration as an opportunity for advocacy work. The ministry of the European churches to migrants at their borders is commendable. It has elements of caring, sharing, healing and a ministry akin to that of a Good Samaritan. These churches are driven by the Christian conviction informed by the words of Jesus who said, "I was hungry, naked imprisoned..." Mt. 25:31f). While the caring ministry of the churches in Europe is appreciated, it is also important to engage these churches in a deeper dialogue by raising some critical questions. Why are there migrants? Why do they leave their countries? Who should take responsibility for their forced migration?

Senior Carers  
(caregivers for  
old people) rally  
in the U.K. in  
2008. (Photo:  
Kanlungan-UK)





The Global Ecumenical Network on Migration (GEM) in a meeting in Budapest, Hungary on November 24 - 28, 2009. GEM advocates on migration, racism and xenophobia, and monitors the effect of migration on changing ecclesial contexts.

“There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus” (Gal. 3:28).

The prevailing view in many migrant receiving countries is that migrants want to come to enjoy better economic conditions in the receiving countries. So much prejudice and resentment against the stranger at the border has been generated by this view. Often, a migrant is also a person of different colour, culture and class. Discrimination and rejection of migrants are also rooted on race, colour and class prejudices alongside fear of the unknown. The stranger and the ‘other’ is always a problem.

Some churches and group in receiving countries see migrants in their midst as an opportunity to evangelize or to proselytize, which is a misunderstanding of mission and evangelism. Rather than trying to evangelize migrants, is it incumbent to recognize their brokenness and the wounded Christ amongst them. Then the response becomes not to evangelise or to convert but to witness to the Gospel of Jesus Christ by being a community that accompanies victims and advocates their just cause. In that accompaniment Jesus is seen as the disciples saw him when he walked with them on the road to Emmaus (Luke 24: 13f). Can the churches in these affluent nations be like the one who accompanied the disciples on the road to Emmaus? It is this the way of doing mission needed today?

Churches in receiving countries need to listen and to engage with critical voices from churches and civil society groups in sending countries. Churches in sending countries

must accompany the churches in the receiving countries by telling the story of suffering and struggles of migrant workers.

Those in affluent countries should realize that their affluence is a result of centuries of colonisation and plunder of resources of their former colonies. They have become rich by making others poor.

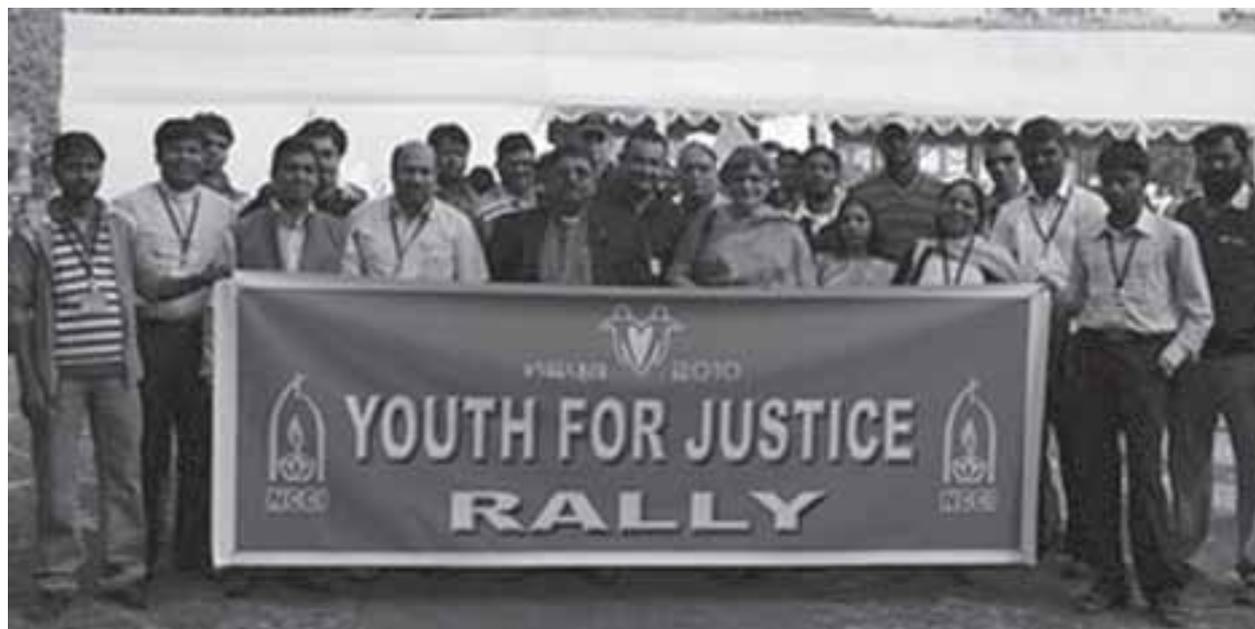
Repentance is needed in as we minister to migrants and refugees echoing the conversion of Zacchaeus, “Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have defrauded any one of anything, I restore it fourfold” (Luke 9: 8).

Repentance can come only when the affluent and the powerful realize that justice go beyond charity and practice justice. Those who cross international borders are not beggars seeking pity and mercy but are crying out for justice, reparation, and restoration of their human dignity.

Those who cross borders also have gifts to share from their rich cultures. It is acknowledged that in 2008 alone Australia managed to earn almost 4 billion Australian dollars from the migrants who are in their midst. The migrant is both a recipient of hospitality and a giver of skills and cultures. The churches have a unique opportunity to prophecy through their ministry to migrants that offers healing and reconciliation to individual migrants, their communities and nations.

Freddy de Alwis

## National Ecumenical Youth Assembly



NEYA participants

More than 400 young people participated in the the National Ecumenical Youth Assembly (NEYA) organized by the Youth Commission of National Council of Churches in India (NCCI) which took place on 6-10 January 2010, in Kolkata, India. Hosted by Church of North India (CNI) Kolkatta Diocese, the assembly met on the theme 'Come Let us be Friends with God, Nature and Humanity'.

Some youth participants from other South Asian countries also participated to further strengthen the ecumenical youth network in South Asia. Dr Mathews George Chunakara, Director of International Affairs Commission of the World Council of Churches (WCC) delivered the keynote address. Eminent church leaders from India and other South Asian countries were also present and expressed their solidarity and commitment in promoting the youth ecumenical movement.

Vineeth Koshy, Executive Secretary of the Youth Commission of NCCI stated that the "National Ecumenical Youth Assembly 2010

aimed to promote an inclusive paradigm of relation to ecumenism for relating with the whole of creation. The youth made a declaration that they believe that the friendly relation has enough strength and potential which can bind and unite all humanity together. The call of friendship to is to renew and revitalize the tampered and broken relations with their fellow beings, nature and the creator."

Ms Moumita Biswas, Joint Executive Secretary for Ecumenical Formation, Gender Justice and Youth Empowerment (EGY) and representing CCA, conveyed CCA's solidarity and support to this ecumenical endeavor. CCA heartily congratulates NCCI for its efforts in helping revitalize the ecumenical movement of the youth in India.

Moumita Biswas

## Assembly Volunteers

CCA is blessed to have two volunteers helping in the preparatory work for the 13th General Assembly on April 14 to 21, 2010, in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. Two young men generously offered their time and talents to help ease the staff burden in preparing for the assembly. CCA is truly grateful to God and to Ling and Tim.



Boonyarid Promsuttipong or Ling, comes from Chiangmai, Thailand. A member of the 14th District of the Church of Christ in Thailand (CCT), he is pursuing a Master of Divinity degree at the International Programme of the McGilvary College of Divinity, Payap University. He serves as staff of the Youth Ministry Unit of CCT while volunteering for the 13th CCA General Assembly preparations. Ling's interests include organising events, theology, music and sports.

Timothy comes from Minnesota, USA, where he completed a B.A. Degree in History and Political Science at Bethel University in January 2008. In addition to his volunteer work at CCA specifically for the 13th CCA General Assembly, he volunteers at the Ecumenical Coalition on Tourism (ECOT), assists at a local kindergarten, and tutors English in Chiang Mai. His interests include religio-political issues, Middle East history, Information Technology and music.



## SACC celebrates 15th anniversary

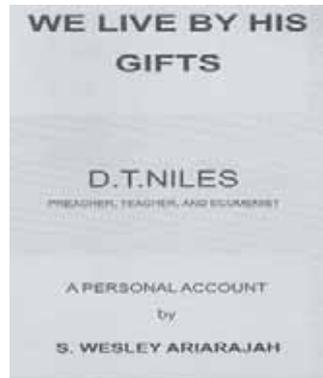
To commemorate the 15th anniversary of the South Asian Council of Churches (SACC), 70 heads of Churches and Church leaders from around South Asia gathered on January 6 to 8, 2010, at the YMCA in Kolkata, India, for a Consultation on "Towards A Relevant Missiological Vision for Pluralistic South Asia".

Consultation participants reviewed Christianity and Christian Mission through

the years and assessed its relevance to existing ground realities, and to look towards the future with hope and preparation. Eminent theologians actively involved in ecumenical mission shared their valuable insights and experiences. The Consultation issued a clarion call for 'Change' that would revitalize and give Mission a new vibrancy rooted in South Asian realities.

Moumita Biswas

## We Live by His Gifts



D. T. Niles

On May 4, 2008 the Centenary birth Anniversary of D.T. Niles was remembered and to mark that occasion a book titled “We Live By His Gifts” was published by the Ecumenical Institute For study and Dialogue in Colombo, Sri Lanka. It is a personal account about D.T. Niles written by Rev. Dr. Wesley Ariarajah who had known Niles for more than 17 years as his pastor, principal of the school where he studied, and as the head of the Methodist Church he served.

As one reads the 169 page well researched account of D.T. Niles written by Wesley Ariarajah, one is introduced to a great ecumenical leader who was born into the tiny island of Ceylon, now known as Sri Lanka. Although born in this small island he managed to put this island on the ecumenical map of the world through his writings, leadership given at world gatherings and his eloquent style of preaching and debating. Wesley in this book describes Niles as Preacher, Teacher and Ecumenist. It is interesting to read through these pages and encounter this servant of God who was a gift to the Christian Church in a particular time in history.

Wesley begins this book with the tributes paid to him at his death. It is unusual to begin a book about a life story of a person with his death. But, Wesley has reasons to do so and I hope you will discover those reasons by taking time to read it! At the funeral service held in the Kollupitiya Methodist Church, the late Bishop Harold Soysa of the Anglican Church in Ceylon had to say the following “ It is difficult to define greatness,” said the

bishop, “ but Dr. Niles is among the greatest Christians Ceylon has ever produced, and he is certainly the greatest contribution which the Church in Ceylon has made to the World Church. He didn’t belong to Ceylon only: he belonged to the world”.

According to the late Visser’t Hooft, the first General Secretary of the WCC, D.T. Niles was a man of the soil. According to him what impressed him of D.T. Niles most was the fact that “ ... despite the numerous possibilities to hold extended ecumenical positions at the global level, D.T. insisted on being rooted in Sri Lanka and in Jaffna.”

According to Wesley, D.T. Niles had several influences in his life from his childhood. D.T.’s mother died when he was only a year old and he was brought up in the home of his grandparents until he was old enough to go to school. According to Wesley, in addition to being brought up in a Christian home D.T. had also the influence of Hinduism and that influence would have come from his grandmother “who was closer to Hinduism and Siva piety than his mother, whom he had lost very early in life”. This influence also influenced his theology and the art of praying. Wesley continues to write in this book, “My own feeling is that while D. T.’s paternal grandfather, Daniel Poor, was his model and inspiration for his ministerial commitment, his paternal grandmother, Mary Joshua, who was closer to Hindu piety, was responsible for his spiritual formation.”

In this book Wesley also shows the

contribution he made to the Asian Churches and his pioneering work in the formation of the EACC which later became the CCA. It is said that D.T. had the talent to discover the gifts in people and to promote them to leadership positions. This also led to misunderstanding and because of his style of leadership some even disliked him. Therefore, Wesley says "D.T. too had his share of weaknesses, problems, and people who opposed him." Wesley also shows in this book what made him make such controversial decisions and the reasons behind those decisions. According to Wesley "His strengths, however, submerged his weaknesses. He had a charismatic personality, sharp intellect, unique style of eloquence where thoughts, words and gestures synchronized perfectly for the greatest effect, tremendous capacity for friendship, genuine pastoral concern and exceptional leadership qualities. It is not uncommon for us to meet persons who have two or three of these qualities in good measure. D. T. is one of the rare persons in whom all these qualities converged in great measure. Those who heard him speak invariably got deeply engrossed in what he had to say, even if they did not agree with him. He always spoke with conviction, a conviction that rose from his understanding of

the Gospel and its implications for the world."

Wesley in this book quotes from Tracy K. Jones, Jr., one of the senior mission board executives in the USA. According to Tracy, D.T. "...was a rare combination of rational brilliance and irrational stubbornness; warm charm and relentless aggressiveness. When he stood up in a meeting, whether in England or the USA, he usually took over..."

This is the personality of D.T. Niles who is described in this book as the "The Man, The Preacher, The Ecumenist and The Teacher". I recommend this book to pastors, theological students and teachers and ecumenical leaders. As Asians we should be proud of ecumenical leaders of this stature, and thank God for the gift of this man who lived and influenced others by his gifts!

Rienzie Perera

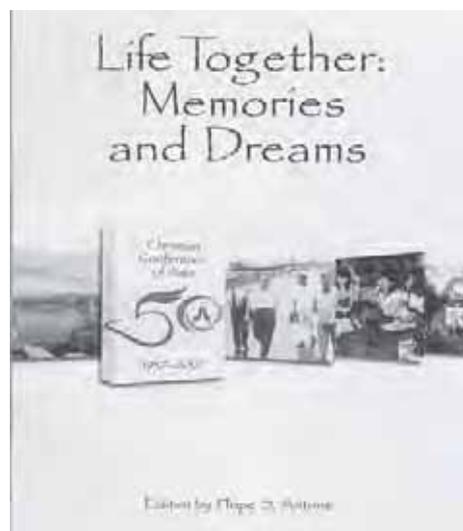
*It is a tradition for CCA to have the D.T. Niles Lectures every general assembly to honor and remember the legacy of D. T. Niles. One of the lecturers for the 13th CCA General Assembly in April 2010 is Dr. Daniel Preman Niles, son of D. T. Niles.*

## CCA's 50th Anniversary book of stories

In March 2007 over a hundred thousand local Indonesian and international ecumenical people took part in the 50th anniversary celebrations of the Christian Conference of Asia held in Parapat, Pemantang Siantar and Medan in Indonesia, where CCA was born. The celebrations recalled memories of CCA's continuing mutual commitment in building communities of peace for all and that the ecumenical movement in Asia provides a common ground of visible unity amidst diversity among peoples.

*Life Together: Memories and Dreams* is a collection of life stories and experiences of various people in their ecumenical journey with CCA. It contains a wide range of stories and reflections of the life and work of CCA in the past half century. While not so much historical narratives they do convey powerful messages to younger generations journeying in a new challenging ecumenical world.

The book is now available by order at 3 USD a copy. Email [cca@cca.org.hk](mailto:cca@cca.org.hk)



# God Calls Us All

Luna L. Dingayan

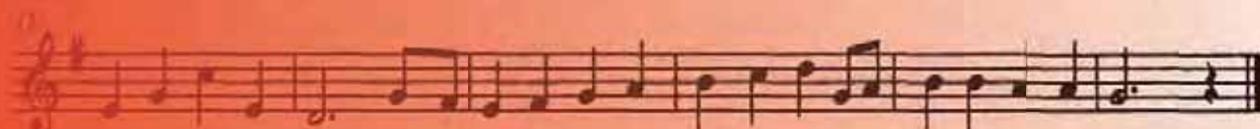
Pearl Dingayan



1. God calls us all to pro - phe-sy to the peo-ple of our time Call them
2. God calls us all to re - con-cile and to live in u - ni - ty, Let us
3. God calls us all to heal and love and to res - tore bro - ken lives. Let us



to re-pent and to change their ways and to walk in righteousness. Though our voice of pro - phe - cy ignored and we may learn to love and to pray for those we re-gard as e - ne - mies. Let us all up - root the roots that make for a break the walls of hosti - li - ties that di - vide communi - ties. Let us build commu-ni-ties of peace where God's



live in pain or die. God our hope of ge - nueine peace and life un-to us al - ways a - bide. con - flict to e - xist. Let our lives be changed and be re - newed by the grace of God of peace. love and jus - tice reign. Let us come and ce - le - brate our life and God's love that makes us whole.

ECUMENICAL THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

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