



## Asian Ecumenical Youth Assembly Statement

### “Lord, Send Your Light and Truth to Lead Us.”

(Psalms 43:3)

We, the youth leaders of Asia belonging to more than 100 Christian denominations and ecumenical councils in 23 Asian countries have gathered for the Asian Ecumenical Youth Assembly (AEYA) organized by the Christian Conference of Asia (CCA) and held from 6 to 13 April 2018, in Manado, Indonesia. We are committed to journey together in search of light and truth in Asia’s diverse contexts. We listened to and discussed the current and future challenges in our local contexts. We strongly desire, as a united cohort of young Asian Christians, to have the mind-set of Christ, and to be his hands and feet (1 Cor. 12:12-31). We seek God's light and truth in our world that is increasingly overcome by darkness. Therefore, we want to be ambassadors of justice and peace in the changing times and the era of globalization.

#### Our Affirmation

*We affirm that:*

God creates diversities, such as race, sexualities and abilities. God desires peace on earth (Isaiah 2) within our diversity. All religions bring peace, love and justice; however, religious fundamentalism and radicalism are causing pain and suffering to people in our member countries, particularly in Pakistan, Bangladesh, Myanmar, Sri Lanka, India, Indonesia, Laos and the Philippines. God desires us to unite for good (Romans 8:28); however, we are hurt by the human-made divisions in Asia.

*We affirm that:*

We are created to coexist with all God’s creation (Isa 11:6-9); however, we are exploiting our environment by taking more than we need, not being good stewards of creation. God desires humans to have a holistic life (Mark 2:1-12), free of stigma and discrimination; however, due to our ignorance and apathy, marginalized people, such as those living with HIV and people with disabilities, are still facing stigma and discrimination in our churches and communities. Consequently, there is limited access to care and education. The churches have not been adequately providing space for marginalized individuals to contribute their spiritual gifts.

We are created as interdependent beings; (Gen 1) but, there are people who are consumed by their own greed, taking life out of our neighbour. Consequently, our neighbour, living in socio-economic and financial disadvantages, is forced into migration and human trafficking.

We are made in the image of God (Gen 1:27) but because of sin entering humanity (Gen 3), the Church has historically had a distorted understanding of gender and sexuality. We recognize that we as a church have sinned against women and LGBTIQ+ individuals. They have been excluded, discriminated against and, in some cases, subjected to violence from the church. We recognize that there are a variety of views on gender roles and sexual orientations, and therefore we must respect one another's views. We are given the ministry of reconciliation (2 Cor. 5:14-18). As God reconciled us through Jesus, we also seek to be reconciled with those the Church has injured.

God desires the young to be nurtured (Prov. 22:6). The ultimate aim of education in Asian societies has been unnecessary competitiveness, disproportionate wealth accumulation and self-centred prestige. This culture has encouraged jealousy, greed and consumerism (1 Tim 6:9-10). The real purpose of education is to nurture gifts and talents given to us, and to transform communities.

## Changing Times

Technological advancements are unavoidable and they are rapidly transforming the economic and social contours of the world in which we live.

*We affirm that:*

God creates humans to edify themselves in creativity, to use available resources for the fullness of life (John 10:10); however, misuse of technology has harmed creation. Social media and digitization have made the world a smaller place by connecting people and providing them with novel work opportunities. It has also created platforms that admire inauthentic virtual images of self-edification and virtual activism without real engagement. It offers the young generation new freedoms, but also instability and vulnerabilities. We are susceptible to becoming digital nomads with limited direction on how to use online spaces fruitfully. Futuristic technologies, like Artificial Intelligence, are likely to make inroads into our lives soon. The churches need to be wisely adaptive to new technology in the changing context. Indigenous technology and local wisdom must also be appreciated and supported. The concept of “family” is changing from a traditional understanding to a variety of definitions; consequently, conflicts occur in the Church. This has led to the exclusion, discrimination and isolation of members of the Church who do not fulfil the traditional concept, such as single parents, the divorced and the unmarried.

Many young people suffer from conditions like depression due to unemployment, cyber bullying, loneliness, social expectations, etc. However, the churches have not adequately addressed mental health issues, contributing to people’s self-harm and, in some cases, suicide. There are certain communities in Asia facing militarization issues, and we affirm its far-reaching impact on the lives of young Asians.

## Our Response

*We call on the CCA member churches and councils to:*

- Celebrate diversities by accepting and respecting religious others through interreligious dialogues, and set aside a prayer day for peace.
- Support peaceful resolutions to conflicts, such as peace talks and peace processes, particularly in the Korean Peninsula, Myanmar, Philippines and Sri Lanka.
- Proactively engage with marginalized communities and accompany them in their journey to be recognized, listened to, respected and treated equally, particularly the Dalits and the Tribal peoples in India and the Lumads in the Philippines.
- Apologize for actions and inactions that have preserved the mistreatment of women and our LGBTIQ+ siblings. We hope to be more hospitable and welcoming church communities, seeking to be reconciled with them. We advocate continued pastoral care for them in their journey towards healing.
- Break physical and attitudinal barriers that prevent persons with disability from participating in the life of churches.
- End the stigma and discrimination towards people who are marginalized, including those who are living with HIV, by providing adequate awareness and information, care and support.
- Discourage use of non-biodegradable products, especially single-use plastic, in their meetings and conferences.
- Advocate climate justice by initiating programs in the local and national contexts.
- Stand with, support and empower families affected by human trafficking (Lev 19:34); advocate the recognition of the human rights of people on the move and their families with governments, non-governmental organizations and civil society groups.
- Embrace futuristic technology meaningfully in vital development sectors, such as health, education and agriculture, in collaboration with governments.
- Support initiatives for technology to reach the peripheries of our churches, communities and nations.

- Embrace meaningful family values and norms, and promote intergenerational dialogues about changing contexts.
- Break the taboo associated with mental health conditions and re-examine doctrines that have negative implications on this situation.
- Advocate education for all. Education should acknowledge the variety of gifts and respond to holistic development. Education systems should be scientific, home-grown and responsive to the needs of people. These should contribute to community and nation-building, and shape a generation of global citizens.

*We call on young Asian Christians to:*

- Create interfaith friendships, be radical in compassion instead of fundamentalist ideology, and be faithful witnesses through actual engagement with those who are oppressed due to their religious beliefs as well as their appearance, mental state and socio-economic conditions.
- Advocate a holistic, community-based and preventive approach to healthcare, and access to treatment for people with physical and mental health issues.
- Use digital media sensibly so that we may engage with each other without judgment, hate, hurt and prejudice, and limit the proliferation of fake news.

*We urge CCA to:*

- Organise programmes to help young people to understand on Sex, Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Expression (SSOGIE).
- Initiate AEYA at least once every five years.
- Establish youth exchange programmes among the member churches and councils.

With profound thanks to God almighty, the participants of the AEYA hear, reflect and respond to the voices:

Are you ready to listen to the voice of silence?  
 Are you ready to walk together in the darkness?  
 Are you ready to touch the pain of other creatures?  
 Are you ready to see broken bodies in Asia?

O God, dear friend,  
 We hear Your voice in the silence,  
 We walk with You in the darkness,  
 We touch Your pain in all creatures,  
 We see Your broken bodies in Asia.

We will dance with You in the rhyme of Hope.  
 We will sing with You in the gesture of Justice.  
 We will play with You in the land of Peace.

*(AEYA -2018)*

We thank each other for serving as each other's supporter, opponent and filter, all so we may churn out a statement that we can all be proud of, and that will hopefully shed truth and light on young people everywhere. Above all, our thanks and praise to the Almighty who gave us wisdom, determination and privilege to participate at the AEYA-2018.

- *Participants of the AEYA held in Manado, Indonesia ( 6-13 April 2018)*