



Christian Conference of Asia

Asian Ecumenical Women's Assembly (AEWA)

Theme: 'Arise, and be Awake to Reconcile, Renew and Restore the Creation'

21-27 November, 2019

Hsinchu, Taiwan

'Arise, and be Awake to Reconcile, Renew and Restore the Creation'

God created female and male in God's image and made them special and above the rest of the creation. God created them, allowed them to rule over all the earth, and over everything that creeps over the earth (Gen.1: 26-27). God made them with a special purpose and placed them as stewards of the household of God, but they were together responsible for sin and redemption. Both females and males are called to take on God's gifts for the benefit of others as they are stewards of God's grace. They are called to partner together and use their God-given gifts. When Adam and Eve were created in God's image, Adam alone was not given a greater allotment of the divine image; instead, both had the full measure of God's image. They both were created to rule together and to be co-regents, filling the earth and subduing it in full and in equal partnership with better stewardship of God's creation. God intends to use both women and men to advance God's mission and to be partners of change and transformation in every situation. The divine grace of God's power equips women and men to respond and address the emerging issues and concerns of the broken world. God, thus, warrants a dynamic and positive transformation in which both women and men are called to be partners in God's mission of reconciliation, renewal and restoration.

Humankind, who were in the pinnacle of God's creation, lost the God-given opportunity and dominion in the household of God. What we witness in the contemporary context is that the household of God is marred and the integrity of the entire creation is sullied. God's purpose and care for the creation, as well as to recognize the unique position of humanity in God's created order, has lost its integrity. The sacrifice of Jesus on the cross reconciles God and humanity. The cross powerfully reminds the world to reflect again upon the image of God, and the responsibility to heed the cry and groan of creation. God, who wants to reconcile all things to Himself, calls God's image bearers to reconcile, renew and restore the broken world. God reminds God's image bearers that as they live in a fallen state, they remain an affront to God's purpose. God expects both women and men to be the instruments of transformation with God's divine guidance to reconcile, renew and restore the creation. God who loves and cares for all God's people, calls them to arise, awake and partake in God's mission of reconciliation, renewal and restoration of the entire creation groaning in pain.

The Asian Ecumenical Women's Assembly (AEWA) initiated by the Christian Conference of Asia (CCA) will be a platform for a representative group of Asian Christian women to come together to discuss their role as partners in God's mission of healing the wounded and the broken world and to be catalysts of reconciliation, renewal and restoration of creation.

Reconciliation: The mission of God in a fallen and broken world is reconciliation. God's mission of reconciliation is holistic, including relationships with God, self, others, and creation. Reconciliation is God's initiative to restore broken relations and situations in the world and to reconcile all things to Himself" through Christ (Col. 1:20). Christians believe that it is God's love that Christ died for others, thus giving them the gift of reconciliation. God made possible the reconciliation of human beings to God through the cross (Rom. 5: 8-11). It is this belief that motivates and sustains them to participate

in God's mission by being transformed into ambassadors of reconciliation. God has committed to humanity the message of reconciliation, and it is reconciliation that reconnects humanity to God. Reconciliation has to come from outside the self-interest, from something other than the conflicted self or community, from a love that knows no interest except the interest of the other. The source of this love is the Triune God who exists in an eternal relationship of giving, offering and accepting of generosity and receptivity.

Reconciliation is made possible and effective only when justice is ensured in situations where personal and social relations are mutually established without any preconditions. Reconciliation plays a role in healing wounds, building trust, and rectifying injustices. Etymologically, 'reconcile' comes from *katalássō* (Grk.), the root of catalase, or catalyst. The catalyst itself is "substance which speeds a chemical reaction but itself remains unchanged". As the followers of Jesus Christ, we are all called to be partners and catalysts in God's mission of reconciliation in every sphere of life. God, the creator of all things, and with God's creative vision big enough to include women and men from all walks and stages of life, from different backgrounds and cultures, wants us to be initiators and catalysts of reconciliation in a broken world. Ultimately, God, who is the source, the agent, the initiator, and the redemptive force of reconciliation, makes everything possible. As Apostle Paul says, "Now all these things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation" (2 Cor. 5:18). Reconciliation, a costly process, is not a one-time experience or outcome. Reconciliation is not limited only in personal relations, but it covers the entire cosmos where all God's creation dwells. Christians are called to be catalysts in pursuing reconciliation as we believe that "in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting the message of reconciliation to us" (2 Cor. 5:17-19).

Renewal: Renewal means the ongoing process of renewing, resuming something after the interruption, resumption, recommencement, the continuation of work, re-establishment, repairing old thing, restoring to a former state after decay or deprivation, rebuilding, repairing and more. Renewal in the New Testament, in Greek term could mean both reversals to an original state, and change towards something new. Renewal as it appears in the Christian tradition describes how God works in the lives of the faithful and experiences the power of the Holy Spirit who raised Jesus from the dead. Renewal leads us to experience the presence and power of God in which we were created. In biblical theological terms, the essence and meaning of renewal have been found in different contexts and in various senses. The Psalmist illustrates to give a new appearance, to refresh, to restore the face of the earth (Ps. 104:30); in 1 Samuel 11:14, to establish more firmly the kingdom by reinstalling King Saul; in 2 Chronicles 15:8, to rebuild or repair the broken altar; in Lamentations 5:21, "renew our days," restore the favours of former days; Isaiah 40:31, it refers to the restoring of spiritual strength.

In our Asian context, we need to experience renewal of the creation through God's handy works focusing on our day to day life situation, renewal of spiritual life, healing of the sick, the healing of the broken life, the disabled people, people living with HIV, to be in solidarity with migrants, stateless, and refugees. As Christians, we are called to put down and forget former things, old perspectives, and not to dwell on the past bitter experiences and outdated practices in thoughts and actions as the words of God Almighty reminds us "Do not dwell on the past. See, I am doing a new thing!" (Isa. 43: 18-19). As the Psalmist prays, we need to beseech God's divine guidance and pray "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. Do not cast me away from Your Presence and do not take Your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of Your Salvation and sustain me with a willing spirit." (Ps. 51:10-12).

Restoration: Restoration is the act of returning something to its former condition. To restore means to bring back. God is a God who restores people, situations, and even turn around the negative circumstances to work for good. The biblical narratives on restoration cover a number of aspects. Restoration indicates the ongoing process of bringing back to the original state, rebuilding, reviving, bringing back to life, reestablishment after interruption; making peace between two or more parties.

The preaching of the Old Testament prophets clearly outlined several such instances. Their faith in the unique position and mission of Israel as the chosen people of God inspired in them the conviction that the destruction of the nation would eventually be followed by a restoration. The Psalmist cries out "Restore our captivity, LORD, like streams in the South". Restoration is needed to bring back the lost conditions in life situations: freedom from captivity, liberation from vulnerable situations, health and heal wounds. In the book of Joel, God promises to make possible the impossible: "I will restore the years that the locust has eaten". When God's people had suffered the complete destruction of their entire harvest through swarms of locusts that marched like an insect army through the fields, destroying the crops, multiplying their number as they went, they experienced the assurance: "Be glad, O children of Zion, and rejoice in the Lord your God, for he has given the early rain for your vindication; he has poured down for you abundant rain, the early and the latter rain, as before. The threshing floors shall be full of grain; the vats shall overflow with wine and oil. I will restore to you the years that the swarming locust has eaten, the hopper, the destroyer, and the cutter, my great army, which I sent among you". (Joel 2:22-25). On other occasions in the Bible, we see God's interventions to restore the dignity of the excluded, marginalized, the outcasts, and the vulnerable. In the teaching of Jesus and the apostles, such a restoration at many levels was taken for granted. It proved that restoration was a process of both an individual and a collective pursuit and responsibility. The assurances of God, who is the Restorer, do not allow anything to end abruptly. The Restorer God's people are assured and reminded that "They will rebuild the ancient ruins and restore the places long devastated; they will renew the ruined cities that have been devastated for generations (Isa. 61: 4).

In the contemporary Asian context, restoration is needed in various areas: the rights of the trafficked people, the migrant workers, liberation from modern slavery, restoring the situation of peaceful co-existence of ethnic groups and restoration of the creation marred by the destructive forces against the will of God.

Objectives of the Asian Ecumenical Women's Assembly (AEWA)

Women in Asia have been making significant progress in many areas of life. Their remarkable contributions to different fields especially in making substantial changes in making qualitative improvements in empowering women and ensuring gender equality, as well as promoting their dignity, have been recognised widely. Economic, social, and political developments have brought with them profound changes in the status of women in different parts of Asia. Despite all these positive signs, achieving and realizing the rights, dignity and capability of a large number of women continue to remain a major requirement for attaining the goal of a just and sustainable society. A wide array of issues affects and threatens Asia's harmonious situation today. Access to basic amenities in life, education, health care, employment are still unreachable goals for a vast number of Asian women. Forced migration due to war and conflicts or poor economic conditions are major factors threatening the dignity of Asian women. Women who live in vulnerable situations in Asia are trafficked and sexually exploited. Gender discrimination, discriminatory laws and harmful norms prevent women and girls from realizing their full potential as they face discrimination and violence in their communities and at homes.

The contemporary social, political, economic, religious and ecological situations in Asia affront God's purpose of the fullness of life and the integrity of the creation. Asian women are called to be engaged in God's mission of reconciliation, renewal and restoration of every situation and context in the midst of numerous adversities. Of all the metaphors in the Bible for restored union with God in Christ, reconciliation, renewal and restoration speak God's relational commitment to all God's creation. Genuine reconciliation in every context requires a completely changed attitude and willingness to embrace and transform the difficulties to a changed situation. As the situation in Asia faces multiple complexities, women in Asia will have to come forward to address the challenges. In such situations, the women in churches cannot be mere spectators. Asian women have to demonstrate their commitments in partnership with men to initiate reconciliation, renewal and restoration in situations that warrant their participation and intervention at all levels. The AEWA will provide a platform for

250 selected women representatives of Asian churches/councils and ecumenical organisations/institutions to come together to voice out the Asian realities, to share their experiences, vision and wisdoms, to empower each other to reconcile, renew and restore their church/community/society and nation, and to revitalize Asian women's ecumenical movement.

Venue and Date:

- The AEWA will be held in Hsinchu, Taiwan from 21 to 27 November 2019, and hosted by the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan.

Participants:

- Those who are interested to attend the AEWA are encouraged to send their Application Forms with the endorsement of CCA member churches/councils or other ecumenical organizations/institutions.
- The composition of the participants will be based on a selection criteria including mixed age groups: age between 60 -70 (10 %); 45 - 59 (30 %); 30 - 44 (40 %); 20 - 29 (20 %).

Board and lodging:

- All registered participants will be provided board and lodging as well as local transportation during the AEWA.
- Participants are encouraged to arrange their international air tickets by themselves or through member churches/ councils/ sponsoring bodies, especially those who are from economically advanced countries and regions such as Australia, New Zealand, Japan, South Korea, Macau and Hong Kong.
- Limited travel subsidies will be allocated for participants from countries of West, South and South East Asian as well as Mongolia and North Korea as per CCA's travel subsidy policies.

Registration Fee:

- Selected participants will be asked to pay a registration fee at the time of registration. Participants from Australia, Hong Kong, Japan, Korea and New Zealand are expected to pay US\$ 100 , and participants from West, South and South East Asian countries US\$ 50.

Nominations / Applications of participants must be submitted to

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