

cca news



Time for Fullness of Life for All CCA's 11th General Assembly



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96, 2nd District, Pak Tin Village,
Mei Tin Road, Sha Tin, NT,
Hong Kong SAR, China

Telephone + 852 2691 1068

Fax + 852 2692 4378

email cca@cca.org.hk

www.cca.org.hk

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Feliciano V. Cariño

EDITOR

Geoff Alves

EDITORIAL BOARD

Henriette Hutabarat

Daniel Thiagarajah

EDITORIAL

We have received much correspondence commending the holding of the 11th General Assembly of the CCA in Tomohon. Many noted the high sense of conviviality and celebration that pervaded it. Others referred to the new program structure adopted at the Assembly and wondered whether this was a first step towards 're-inventing' CCA towards the twenty-first century. Still others marvelled at the fact that it was held in Indonesia at such a critical and for many such an uncertain point in the life of that country and how the Assembly was an expression of 'the art of Christian solidarity'. Most however remembered the wonderful hosting of the Assembly by the churches and people of Tomohon and Manado, and the whole of the regency of Minahasa.

Most participants were hosted and stayed in the homes of families in the Tomohon and Manado area. The Assembly opened with opening worship and ceremonies at the Manado Sports Stadium, which was filled to capacity by over 10,000 people. Church bells all over the city of Manado tolled as the governor of North Sulawesi announced the opening. Church congregations supplied our food in great abundance. Hundreds of people from all over the Tomohon area came to visit the Assembly daily—some attending the sessions, others simply showing interest, perhaps curiosity, over what the CCA is and what its Assembly was doing. We were received enthusiastically by the churches at worship on the Sunday we were there. That the President of Indonesia, Abdurrahman Wahid, visited and addressed the Assembly added significance to the event, for us and for the people of that part of Indonesia. We were promised and were given an Assembly that was held at the 'bosom of the people'. U Kyaw Than, one of the former General Secretaries of the CCA, underscored in his letter that in terms of the participation of churches and people and the creative work that this produces, no other CCA Assembly could compare with Tomohon.

Were we starting a precedent, or perhaps a tradition? Certainly not intentionally. The Tomohon Assembly however has raised rather pointedly issues that future gatherings of the CCA must have to consider, issues, for example, that have to do with what it means for the CCA as an ecumenical body to be 'of the church,' and 'of the people', and what it means for both to support and enable CCA events and activities in the future.

We are now in process of putting into operation the new program structure that the Tomohon Assembly approved. The new Personnel Committee has already met and will meet again in September to make recommendations concerning executive staff matters. The Search Committee for the new General Secretary has started its work in preparation for the first regular meetings of the new General and Executive Committees in early December. Presumably, at these meetings, the new General Secretary will be elected. The first joint meetings of the program area committees will be held in the early part of 2001. While we are not 're-inventing CCA', it seems nevertheless clear that CCA is on a good organisational and programmatic footing as it starts work in the new millennium.

As ever we are grateful to the Gereja Masehi Injili di Minahasa (GMIM) for having hosted the 11th Assembly and for having shared so much of its life and resources with us during our stay in Tomohon.

Feliciano V. Cariño

Fullness of Life for All

An assembly to remember

The General Assembly in Tomohon will long be remembered in the history of CCA. It certainly was a 'time for fullness of life for all'.

Fullness!

First, it will be remembered for where and how it was held. What a welcome the participants received! Each day large numbers of people came to visit the Assembly at the top of Inspiration Hill. Everything we did was observed with interest. As Tomohon is only a small country town we stayed with the people in their homes. Who could forget the warmth of the hospitality we received? Who could forget the meals? A local was heard to comment, 'This is good. Just exactly what the CCA theme says: time for fullness of life for all!' In Indonesian it meant it was time for everyone to fill their stomachs to the full! We are grateful to GMIM and the people of Northern Sulawesi for their incredible generosity in providing so much.

Life!

Next, the 2000 Assembly, held at the rim of the twenty-first century, will be remembered for bringing to fruition a new

vision and a new structure for CCA. The important paper, 'Towards New Thrusts and a New Structure for the CCA' is published in this issue of *CCA News* as a lift-out supplement. Examining the role and purpose of the ecumenical work in Asia at a time of enormous changes in the world and with the practicalities of economics, this document provides a blueprint for CCA in the future.

For All!

Further, the Tomohon Assembly will hopefully be remembered as the time we began to realise that our organisation must be for all people, not just a few. The paper on the new structure reminds us that large numbers of Christians in Asia are outside our movement, that there are many (and large) countries and churches who are not part of CCA. And the debates at the Assembly reminded us yet again that we still have a way to go in including all of our people in the life of CCA—especially women and youth.

We invite you to share some of the fullness of the life of the Tomohon Assembly in the next few pages.

Geoff Alves



Grand Opening to Assembly

Thousands fill the Manado stadium to celebrate the commencement of the 11th General Assembly

The Manado Football Stadium was filled to overflowing as more than 10,000 people gathered for the solemn yet festive worship service that marked the opening of the 11th CCA Assembly.

Traditional North Sulawesi songs and dances and a beautifully choreographed 'human moving-billboard', involving more than 2,000 schoolchildren, greeted the delegates and observers along with the people of the area.

The ceremony opened with the Presidium striking gongs—a signal to release hundreds of multi-colored balloons.

Prayers, scripture reading and songs, in English and Indonesian, including a simultaneous recitation of the Lord's Prayer in different languages dominated the opening worship.

Addressing the crowd, Dr W.R. Roeroe, former moderator of the Christian Evangelical Church in Minahasa (GMIM), said the Assembly came at a particularly sensitive time in the life of the Indonesian churches in particular and Indonesia in general. The host country has been battered by economic, social and political crises. Dr Roeroe challenged the delegates to the

Assembly 'not to be listeners but doers of God's will'. To do so, the leading Indonesian church leader asked delegates to engage in deep and serious review as well as envision the general direction and common vision for the future mission and programs of the CCA.

'The assembly is an opportunity,' Dr Roeroe continued, 'to reaffirm and rearticulate our common vision and fervent wish for the fullness of life not only in Indonesia, but in Asia and the world over.'

The culmination of the two-hour service was the sending forth of the faithful by GMIM pastors.

The second part of the opening ceremonies was highlighted by a spectacular showcase of dances and theatrical presentations featuring 300 Indonesian youth.

The tableau depicted the different parts of Indonesia and their suffering before Jesus Christ came. Scourged and beaten, he carried his cross to save all people.

Evil was represented by Salome riding in a chariot spreading confusion in her wake. After the welcoming speeches, participants were introduced country by country as their banners were paraded in front of the grandstand.



CCA Presidium, Margaret Rodgers, Aye Mo Tin, Yotaro Konaka and Kenneth Fernando sound gongs to commence the 11th Assembly

An Extraordinary Assembly

The Christian Conference of Asia adopts a new structure

The Extraordinary General Assembly held on 1 June 2000 voted for a new program structure and constitutional amendments for CCA.

The process, which had been going on for the past five years since the 10th General Assembly in Colombo, reached its culmination when the Assembly unanimously voted for all constitutional amendments. The new program structure allows CCA to carry out its program with more flexibility instead of limiting its activities within nine program units as in the past.

The youth and women delegates' recommendations for separate staff

persons for these concerns were also accepted.

In the new arrangement there will be four parts—the General Secretariat; Faith, Mission and Unity; Justice, International Affairs, Development and Service; and Ecumenical Formation, Gender Justice and Youth Empowerment.

The proposals for a new structure and vision and the constitutional amendments prepared by special committees and approved by the Executive and General Committees of CCA had been circulated to CCA member churches and councils six months prior to the Assembly.

CCA General Secretary Dr Feliciano Cariño explained the need for this kind of a new program structure for CCA in the emerging Asian ecumenical and ecclesiastical context.

Dr Cariño, who was an Executive Committee member before being elected as the General Secretary of CCA, was instrumental in drafting the first vision and structure of CCA, which was published at the 10th General Assembly in Colombo in 1995.

The Assembly approved all constitutional amendments and rules and regulations without any discussion except for clarification on certain clauses.



A Celebration of Unity

The local and the universal brought together in communion

The communion that began the first day's proceedings was a very moving experience. People from almost all denominations represented in CCA were able to take part, using the worldwide ecumenical Lima Liturgy. The principal celebrant was His Grace Metropolitan Dr Joseph Mar Iranaeus, assisted in the whole liturgy by three clergy. About sixty bishops and clergy from different regions of Asia and different ecclesiastical traditions participated as cocelebrants. A feature of the communion service was the involvement of the local churches, which meant there was a conjunction of the local with the universal in this expression of the body of Christ. The elements were in the context of Minahasan culture—the bread was the bread of hospitality, offered when a guest comes to a house, and local wine was served in bamboo cups.



The first day of the Assembly commenced with a very moving communion service shared with the local churches

Visit of Indonesian President

Dialogue with President Wahid

The 11th General Assembly of the Christian Conference of Asia was privileged to have as a special guest the President of the Republic of Indonesia, Abdurrahman Wahid. After a few introductory speeches, President Wahid made his way slowly to the microphone and addressed a full assembly hall of delegates, other participants and observers on the necessity for tolerance.

He reminded everyone how important the gathering was—how we, regardless of nationality, ideology, views, cultures and languages, could meet together to talk about our history and see what could happen in the future.

He hoped that it would be the wish of the people at this conference that they would agree with his oft-quoted statement: ‘We should have dialogue, not monologue.’

We must be willing to hear the other side. We must begin, Wahid said, by understanding other peoples. This of course must work both ways: they must give us understanding also.

The president told how a Muslim intellectual had told him he was a bad Muslim.

‘You must be harsh on others [Christians].’ he was told. Wahid reminded him that the Koran actually says that we must be harsh on those who reject God—which does not include Christians. The intellectual had to admit, ‘I was wrong.’

different from each other. We must accept this difference, we must accept each other’s values and ways of understanding God.

Wahid was impressed by the second Vatican Council’s statement that the bishops respected the rights of others. He also noted that tolerance is embedded in the history and tradition of Southeast Asia.

The Koran calls for tolerance. Property accumulated by contributions made by non-Muslims should be used for the benefit of all.

All this was relevant for the leaders of our society. Tolerance is not one sided. It is a challenge, and it may mean we have to lose something. Decisions of leaders

should be related directly to the welfare of the people. Religious leaders too have to think about the welfare of the people. They must exercise their religion for the benefit of all.

The president only had time to answer two questions—on the economy and the unrest in many parts of his country.



Yotaro Konaka welcomes President Wahid to the Assembly

Wahid said there exists a profound misunderstanding of Islam and Christianity from both sides. Many Muslims do not understand Christianity and there are many Christians who do not understand Islam.

He reminded us that the Bible and the Koran are not the same, and that Christians are not the same. We are

New Office-bearers

Assembly elects presidium and committee members for the next five years

Presidium

Rev. Jennifer Dawson, Anglican Church, Aotearoa New Zealand
 Mr Anthony Row, Methodist Church, Malaysia
 Dr Wong Wai Ching, Anglican Church, Hong Kong
 Suffragan Metropolitan Dr Joseph Mar Irenaus, Malankara Mar Thoma Syrian Church, India

Honorary Treasurer

Mr Israel Poulraj, Anglican Church, Sri Lanka

General Committee

Ms Fuaillelagi J.S. Saleupolu, Methodist Church, Aotearoa New Zealand
 Rev. John Gilmore, Churches of Christ, Australia
 Ms Helen Monisha Sarkar, Bangladesh Baptist Sangha, Bangladesh
 Rev. Francisco M. de Vasconzales, Christian Church, East Timor
 Mr Wan Hoi Wing, Anglican Church, Hong Kong
 Rev. G. Dyvasirvadhham, Church of South India, India
 Mr Tony Waworuntu, Protestant Church in Western Indonesia, Indonesia
 Rev. Kenichi Otsu, United Church of Christ in Japan, Japan
 Mr Smak Sothy, Independent Church, Cambodia

Rev. Kim Dong Wan, Methodist Church, Korea
 Ms Mone Keo, Lao Evangelical Church, Laos
 Rt Rev. Julius Paul, Evangelical Lutheran Church, Malaysia
 Rev. Smith N. Za Thawng, Baptist Church, Myanmar
 Mr Victor Azariah, Presbyterian Church, Pakistan
 Ms Sharon Rose Joy Duremdes, Baptist Church, Philippines
 Mr Rohan Edirisinghe, Anglican Church, Sri Lanka
 Rev. William J.K. Lo, Presbyterian Church, Taiwan
 Rev. Chuleepan Srisutorn-Person, Church of Christ, Thailand

Program Area Committees

Faith, Mission and Unity

Rev. Dr A.A. Yewanggoe (Moderator), Christian Church in Sumba, Indonesia
 Rev. Dr Cheng Yan En (Co-moderator), Presbyterian Church, Taiwan
 Rt Rev. Samuel Pervaiz, Church of Pakistan, Pakistan
 Ms Vidya Rani, United Evangelical Lutheran Church, India
 Rev. Lee Sang Yoon, Methodist Church, Korea
 Rev. Dr Son-Jae, Korean Christian Church, Japan

Ms Leslie Capus, Philippines Independent Church, Philippines
 Ms Rachel Kronberger, Uniting Church, Australia
 Rev. Albert Walters, Anglican Church, Malaysia
 Rev. Dr Pradit Tagerngrangsarit, Church of Christ, Thailand
 Rev. Max Reid, Presbyterian Church, Aotearoa New Zealand
 Rev. Eric So, Congregational Church, Hong Kong
 Rev. Jothiwi, Methodist Church, Sri Lanka
 Ms Nang May San Oo, Baptist Church, Myanmar

Justice, International Affairs, Development and Service

Rt Rev. Elmer Bolocon (Moderator), United Church of Christ, Philippines
 Ms Lee Hyun-Sook (Co-moderator), Presbyterian Church in the Republic of Korea, Korea
 Mr Marvin Farrukh, Church of Pakistan, Pakistan
 Ms Marlene Sigar, Evangelical Christian Church in Minahasa, Indonesia
 Rev. Toshimasa Yamamoto, United Church of Christ, Japan
 Mr Albert Lin, Presbyterian Church, Taiwan
 Mr Sok Sovandy, Methodist Church, Cambodia
 Rev. Dr Pa Sang, Independent Church, Myanmar

Rev. Dr James Haire, Uniting Church,
Australia

Mr Robert Rabin Marrandi, Churches
of God, Bangladesh

Mr Saykham, Lao Evangelical
Church, Laos

Rt Rev. S. Jebanesan, Church of
South India, Jaffna Diocese, Sri
Lanka

Mr Samuel Marcel, Christian Church
in East Timor, East Timor

Ms Rachel Woodhouse, Anglican
Church, Aotearoa New Zealand

Ecumenical Formation, Gender Justice and Youth Empowerment

Ms Khusnud Mussarat (Moderator),
Church of Pakistan, Pakistan

Mr Boonyarit Promsuttipong (Co-
moderator), Church of Christ,
Thailand

Prof. Monica Mannan, Church of
Bangladesh, Bangladesh

Mr Vivek Masih, Church of North
India, India

Ms Mun Yung Eun, Presbyterian
Church in Korea, Korea

Mr Taro Ahihara, Anglican Church,
Japan

Ms Ngeht Sambo, Independent
Church, Cambodia

Dr Mary Dun, Myanmar Baptist
Convention, Myanmar

Ms Amie Dural, Catholic Church,
Philippines

Rev. Cathy Thomson, Anglican
Church, Australia

Mr Paul Johnny, Lutheran Church,
Malaysia

Ms Vivanh K., Lao Evangelical
Church, Laos

Rev. T.P. Simarmata, Batak Protestant
Christian Church, Indonesia

Ms Christina Wong, Independent
Church, Hong Kong

Assembly Liturgy: Asian, Inclusive, Moving



Assembly delegates limbering up before a worship service

Suddenly I realised I am Asian!' Ji-Hyun Nam was herself surprised at the power of the liturgy at the 11th CCA Assembly. 'It was weird to me,' the Korean youth delegate quickly added. Nam says she is used to Western worship forms. 'But prayer and the way the Indonesians treat me is wonderful.'

It was not only business at the Assembly. The carefully prepared liturgies that started and ended the day 'strengthened the spirit' and imparted a sense of inclusiveness in the diverse but transient community.

Mynamar's Lai Thuama was moved. 'I am very happy. Today I sang in Burmese and Korean. The different languages make me feel so accepted.'

The Moderator of the Presbyterian Church in Mynamar, Thuama said that

one Bible study was also 'meaningful' because of its message of peace. Political, ideological and ethnic conflicts in his country disturb him.

'We like it in the morning when everything is peaceful and quiet. But at night we are too tired,' says Vivanh Kommanmuang, delegate from Laos.

The liturgy 'frames the day', Australian youth delegate Rachel Kronberger observed, 'The liturgy works. If it does then there's hope that the whole thing will.'

Daily services including the Holy Eucharist at the opening worship revolved around the Assembly theme, 'Time for Fullness of Life for All'. Crafted by a special worship committee, the liturgy aimed to help participants to encounter God and each other.

The Tomohon Experience

Susan Jacob

Bukit Inspirasi and the smoking volcano of Mount Lokon symbolised the spirit of the CCA Assembly. Imposing, impressive and inspiring, they upheld the triumph of the indomitable spirit of our Indonesian brothers and sisters, who succeeded in hosting this Assembly of gigantic proportions!

The volcano, with dense, thick clouds looming over it, reminded me of the eternal presence of God in all his majesty throughout our ecumenical journey.

The Assembly remains in my mind (and heart) as a collage of colourful, vivid, vibrant and pleasant memories—the grand opening ceremony, the visit of the President, carefully prepared worship services, well-conducted sessions, thought-provoking theme lectures, discussions, business sessions, *Berita* (the Assembly newspaper), wonderful Asian music, the richness and diversity of the mountains of food served, the smiles, warmth and friendliness of the Indonesian people—everything could be described in superlatives!

I felt proud and honoured to be a part of this great Assembly where momentous decisions were taken. It helped me to realise the tremendous responsibility each one of us has as Christians, not only in our own sphere but also to each other.

Above all, that this Assembly was held ‘in the bosom’ of the Indonesian people caused me to redefine my Christian values of love, sharing and community building. I learnt:

- what it meant to throw one’s heart and one’s home open to strangers,
- what a pleasure it was to give, when the giving comes from the heart,
- that no burden is heavy when it is shared by loving hands,
- to go through the chemistry of bonding with people from neighbouring countries who were hitherto political rivals.

All involved have to be congratulated for the well-oiled efficiency with which the whole Assembly was conducted.

And finally, as inscribed on Bukit Inspirasi: ‘We receive inspiration and improvisation and then go back down to the slopes and valleys and the whole land, since in those places, the kingdom of God comes in the midst of struggle: the building up of the people of God who give thanks and rejoice because God is with them in His victory.’

(Susan Jacob is from the Orthodox Church in Chennai, India)



Reframing the View

Philip Freier

Where I live in Darwin, the location of Australia on the rim of Asia is very apparent. Throughout the crisis in East Timor, Darwin figured prominently because of its close proximity to this part of South Asia.

Even in Tomohon, my home in Darwin was a shorter distance than was Jakarta, the capital of Indonesia.

Many Australians are wanting to throw off the mindset that has been part of their colonial origins and history as an offshoot of British imperialism.

For me, participation in the CCA Assembly was a further and important step for my church and for me personally to reframe the view that we hold of the world in a new century.

The twentieth century saw the birth of Australian independence in 1901. The challenge of the new century is for all Australians to relate to their place in the Asia Pacific region.

The CCA Assembly showed how cultural and language differences can meet in the unity of faith and mission, to which we are all called in Christ. The generosity of the church in Minahasa encouraged a real sense of participation in the life of that church and community.

I often talk to different church groups about the need to change our approach to committees, so that we recognise that we are also a community, and emphasise our fundamental ecclesial purpose.

I experienced the CCA Assembly in this way and rejoice to have shared in its life and work in Tomohon.

(Philip Freier is the Anglican Bishop of Darwin, Australia)

Niles Lectures

The Niles Lectures at the Assembly were based on the themes of the Assembly and were delivered by three outstanding church leaders from Asia.



Time for Fullness of Life for All: Wesley Ariarajah

Dr S. Wesley Ariarajah delivered the theme presentation. Dr Ariarajah is Professor of Ecumenical Theology at Drew University in the United States.

DR ARIARAJAH'S ADDRESS was chiefly about Christian discernment and behaviour in a pluralistic world. Referring to the situation in many Asian countries he said, 'The most difficult and challenging time is not the time of wandering but the time of settlement.'

He said that we all have the temptation to follow other gods. 'It is time to say that I and my household will serve God.' But, according to Dr Ariarajah, Christians need to re-evaluate and repent of the way they serve God. He indicated that Jesus taught that we first should serve our neighbour.

According to Dr Ariarajah fullness of life cannot be divorced from the basic needs of the people, rather it has to do with worth and justice and accountability to all human life. The earth is the Lord's and everybody is under God's care. Everybody therefore can become God's child.

His message of inclusiveness was informed by christology. 'God did not become Christian. God became human.' That, he said, is something Christians easily forget. 'Goodness is for all. Otherwise it is not goodness.'

And how are we to be good? Dr Ariarajah told the story of Abraham. Instead of building an ark to escape troubles, as Noah did, Abraham bargained with God on behalf of his neighbours in Sodom who were about to be destroyed. Dr Ariarajah's charge was for us to do likewise.

From Young CCA to Middle Age CCA, to Young Again?

Jin Arai

I have an impression that CCA has become a 'middle aged CCA'. At the General Assembly when we elected the members of the presidium and the members of the three program area committees, we experienced difficulty in electing young members. As a result, the presidium lost a young president and it became a 'middle aged' presidium. This result disappointed many delegates, especially young delegates who would like to contribute to the formation and reformation of CCA.

Some delegates, though, expressed concern regarding young people. 'Though they are energetic, they may not be able to complete their responsibility because they could probably change their job or place of living within five years. Even if they want to work with CCA, their life

may not allow them to do so. Furthermore, the responsibility of the presidency may be too heavy for youth.' We need to hear these opinions. We need to be responsible and reliable in Asia.

However, it seems to me that CCA should be formed, supported, and sustained by all members of the member churches and ecumenical institutions, including young people. They will learn ecumenism through their CCA experience and pass the CCA heritage to the next generation.

I hope CCA will become a 'young CCA' again at the 12th Assembly.

(Jin Arai is from the United Church of Christ in Japan)

Niles Lectures

For Such a Time as This: Our Moment in God's Time: Wong Wai Ching

Dr Wong Wai Ching is the Assistant Professor of Religion at the Chinese University of Hong Kong.

DR WONG began by asking: Why do we have a such an obsession with time in the CCA community? For God there is no urgency for a new time, and there is no irrelevance of past time. However for us there is an urgency for a new time. The year 2000 marks a beginning and an end. For ourselves and our communities it is a time to confess our sins, repent of wrong deeds and to ask for forgiveness and dream new dreams before God.

The urge to inquire about the beginning and the end has always been central to all religions. In Revelation there is no absolute separation between present and future. They are not condemned to eternal conflict; there is no surpassing of the old by the new; the two coexist in human history



as good and evil, each with their own pasts and futures. So, Wai Ching asked, are the tasks laid down for us by the early leaders still valid? Is the task still unfinished? What does Asia mean to us today? We have left behind the nation building of newly independent states. Now we have modernisation and globalisation. The latter bypasses the will of individual national governments and people at large, made possible by a world financial system that is stateless.

Niles Lectures

Revelation assures us however that where there is threat and crisis, there is also comfort and hope. Therefore what we need is not a sequential future that completely separates from this time but a divine reality.

Ironically, globalisation comes as a new opportunity for the peoples of Asia to reunderstand our cultures and traditions. It means constantly engaging in intercultural and interreligious interaction and communication, allowing the greatest inclusivity of the 'others' into oneself. The hope for a true unity of humankind depends on the existence and power of local traditions, on the strength of the wisdom that is stored within them and the possibility to express this wisdom in ways relevant to the contemporary global situation.

Digging deep into our experiences and faith, Wai Ching believes, will help to bring out a web of multiple traditions of Asian Christianity which will provide a helpful counterbalance to the totalistic aspect of globalisation and shape a true unity of humanity for a new generation.

New Communities for the New Millennium: Leonor Briones

Prof. Leonor M. Briones is the Treasurer of the Philippines.



PROF. BRIONES said many countries in Asia are faced with deteriorating levels of human development as measured in terms of income, life expectancy and education. They have had to deal with a financial crisis, natural disasters and civil strife. Yet, while there are images of economic recovery and exciting advances in information technology, this is taking place amidst suffering and misery, the consequences of conflict and environmental degradation. This is the backdrop

against which Christian communities are building communities in the new millennium.

So, said Prof. Briones, the churches in Asia face formidable challenges:

First, there is the challenge of poverty. Nearly one in three Asians is poor. The absolutely poor (earning less than US\$1 a day) present special problems for churches. They are totally excluded from the economy and the political and social system of the country. They are not being reached by anti-poverty programs. While the UN, the Asia Development Bank, civil and church-related endeavours have started massive anti-poverty programs, external events are creating many more poor people.

Next, there is the challenge of debt. The debt stocks for Asia and the Pacific were a massive \$862 billion in 1998. There is a correlation between the state of indebtedness of a country and its capacity to render basic services to its people. The challenge is to come up with feasible solutions. The declaration of a Jubilee Year on Debt is a step in the right direction and needs to be sustained. In the Philippines, Prof Briones has implemented a policy of low and sustainable interest rates, which is reducing the burden. Efforts to give relief to highly indebted countries must continue.

Then there is the challenge of conflict and civil strife. Always it is the innocent who suffer most from armed conflict. In the Philippines where there is armed conflict it has resulted in unemployment, poverty and human suffering. The religions of the world have been leading the quest for unity and peace. As Christians we cannot wait for another two thousand years before peace can be attained.

So, how can churches attain the goal of 'fullness of life for all'?

For centuries Christian churches have been taking care of their own. There is a need to go beyond this, to non-Christians. They must seek solutions to the root causes of poverty, not just its effects. It is time perhaps for Christians to leave the safe confines of their churches and go out into the world and join civic organisations, governments and movements to speak out on national and global issues. In an age of globalisation, information technology and scientific development that has changed moral perspectives and values Christians must speak out.

Finally, that since we are a minority in Asia, Christians must touch base with other religions who are just as concerned about poverty, debt and armed conflict.

The New Presidium



Jennifer Dawson

JENNY DAWSON is a priest with the Anglican Church of Aotearoa, New Zealand and Polynesia. She works for the Diocese of Christchurch as Ministry Educator resourcing clergy and lay people together. She was formerly a secondary school teacher. Jenny has two adult children and in her spare time enjoys painting and bushwalking.



Anthony Row

ANTHONY ROW from Malaysia is involved as a lay leader in the local and national church life of the Methodist Church in Malaysia. He has studied theology, law and business administration and

works as managing director of an international firm in Kuala Lumpur. He was a delegate of the Methodist Church to the WCC Assembly in Harare in 1998. He also provides leadership in the Council of Churches of Malaysia in a few program areas.



Joseph Mar Irenaeus

METROPOLITAN DR JOSEPH MAR IRANAEUS is the Suffragen Metropolitan of the Mar Thoma Syrian Church in India. He received his first degree from Kerala University and did his theological education at the United Theological College in Bangalore. He did his post-graduate theological studies at the Virginia Episcopal Seminary in Alexandria, Virginia, USA and at the Wycliff Hall, Oxford, and St Augustine College, Canterbury, in the UK. He entered into the priesthood of the Mar Thoma Church in 1957 and was consecrated as Bishop in 1975. He has been a bishop in various dioceses of the Mar Thoma Church and was president or moderator of different departments of the church. He has been President of the National Council of Churches in

India, President of the Kerala Christian Council, and served on the boards or committees of various other ecumenical organisations and institutions in India and abroad. He served on the International Affairs Committee of CCA from 1985 to 1990. He became a member of the General Committee of CCA in 1995 and was subsequently elected to the Executive Committee.



Wong Wai-Ching

DR WONG WAI-CHING is a member of the Hong Kong Sheng Kung Hui (the Anglican Church of Hong Kong and Macau). Dr Wong currently occupies the position of Assistant Professor of Religion at the Chinese University of Hong Kong. One of the young and widely sought-after women theologians of Asia, Dr Wong earned her doctoral degree in Old Testament Studies and Feminist Theology from the University of Chicago, Chicago, Illinois, USA. Prior to her present position, she served as Secretary for Asia and the Pacific and later became Chairperson of the World Student Christian Federation.

Removing the Blinkers

Asia Ecumenical Course 2000

In the wee hours of the morning, I boarded a taxi for the airport, with a huge luggage, a box of books and an overnight backpack. Also armed with my notebook, I was ready for a month of serious study and plenty of writing at the Asia Ecumenical Course (AEC), organised by the Christian Conference of Asia (CCA) in Tomohon, Minahasa, North Sulawesi, Indonesia. This course was initiated to equip young church leaders with the knowledge, attitude and skills necessary for participating in the ecumenical task. As such, most of the twenty participants from ten countries (Australia, Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Aotearoa New Zealand, Pakistan, the Philippines, Sri Lanka and Taiwan) were in the age range of 30 to 45.

Involved in activities of the Catholic church most of my life, this was the first time I found myself in the company of women and men from so many of the other Christian traditions (Anglican, Methodist, Baptist, Lutheran,

Presbyterian, Mar Thoma, Reformed, United/Uniting etc.) I felt nervous and embarrassed that I didn't know much about many of the other traditions nor the newer united/uniting churches, except the one thing I had been taught, i.e. that they were from churches that protested and broke away from the Catholic church.

However, when we met Cora from CCA, who organised this course, on arrival, my nervousness evaporated. She was so open and bubbly I felt warm and welcomed. She had such a celebrative mood about her that we were charmed into joining her in making our sessions creative and lively. I knew we were in for something I would never have anticipated. First, she coaxed us into getting up to do meditative exercises at 6.30 in the morning. We had to grudgingly agree but as the days went by, we grew to enjoy and appreciate these early morning exercises together for the energy it gave us to see each day through. Next, she

started us thinking of creative ways of giving claps of welcome, affirmation and appreciation. Then she emphasised that our worship must be creative and Asian. She divided us into four groups and we took turns to plan, organise and execute the entire day's activities starting from the morning worship. As each group drew ideas from their members' practices and experiences, we experienced great richness in our worship, which used symbols and hymns from different Christian and Asian cultural traditions, as well as creative forms of reflections on the scriptural readings, like rituals and skits.

I soon realised that my notebook was redundant. This same creative approach was also encouraged for the preparation and presentation of all our reports. This approach, an expression of what she called 'ecumenical language' (i.e. communicating in any creative way, either with words, phrases, hand or body movements,



drawings, symbols, drama, songs etc.), was appreciated by many among us who found great difficulty in expressing ourselves in English. To tell our personal stories, we had to draw a symbol which we had to explain, and instead of a boring history lesson on the ecumenical journey in each of our countries, we had very interesting presentations in charts and diagrams. Using charts, postcards, posters, flags, maps, magazines and any other aid we could think of, our presentations of our county's socioeconomic and political situation was very informative, fascinating and colourful.

One component of the course was to expose us to the community and church life of the people of Minahasa. One weekend, we were divided into groups and sent to spend one night with the Christian community in one of four areas, and the next weekend, we were sent to spend two nights with the Muslim community in another four areas. Again we had a hilarious time when each of the groups presented their reflections of their visits in songs and skits. We found both communities very hospitable, and we were treated like VIPs in their homes and at the various community gatherings and functions we attended. The Christian community life was centred on worship, in the church and the community groups of men, women, youth and children, while the Muslim community life is centred on community gatherings for expositions of the Koran and life events like weddings and births. The close relationship between the two religious communities was especially highlighted to us. They have a slogan 'Torang samua basaudara' (Kita orang semua bersaudara), meaning we are

all brothers and sisters, which is not only among the community leaders but goes right down to the person in the street. We were even requested to tell the world that communal unrest is only in certain parts of Indonesia and definitely not in Minahasa, where the people do not take for granted the harmony they enjoy but make great efforts to maintain that peace.

Another component of the course was our participation as observers at the 11th General Assembly of the CCA, which gathered about 300 participants consisting of delegates, guests, ecumenical partners and foreign and local observers from different parts of Asia. At the sessions, we watched the youth and women fight for fair participation in the presidium and the general committee, in spite of their unfamiliarity with the process and the obvious control of the men and clergy. I am truly amazed at the courage, eloquence and tenacity of the youth in fighting for their rights in the midst of their elders. Observing the proceedings, I was sad to note that the Catholic church has far to go in forming and involving youth and women, and especially the laity, in decision-making positions in church structures and organisations.

This course also arranged for us to meet and listen to church leaders in the ecumenical field. With the course encompassing the CCA Assembly, we had the opportunity to listen to more church leaders from different parts of Asia than would have been possible otherwise.

We were briefed on the many Christian traditions as well as given an insight into Islamic spirituality. From their first-hand sharing of the situation

and challenges of the churches in some Asian countries, we were deeply moved to hear that churches not only thrive under oppression, but are greatly challenged by it.

As I prepared to leave Tomohon, I had mixed feelings, as did all of the course participants. As much as we looked forward to family and home, we were sad that the life we had shared together was over. Those four weeks removed the blinkers I have had on which kept me knowledgeable and involved only in things Catholic. Living, learning, listening, sharing, laughing and crying together with my brothers and sisters from different countries and Christian traditions has taught me that God created us to speak differently, behave differently, look differently, like different foods, look at situations and issues differently, respond differently, believe in different things, express our belief in different ways, and understand and relate to God differently. I believe that God wants us to enjoy the diversity and be enriched by it and thereby realise that God is much, much, much more than what we can see, hear, smell, taste, touch and comprehend. I have learnt that ecumenism and interreligious dialogue is not just talking or learning but about living—living life actively, fostering the understanding of, having a commitment to and being fully informed and participating in the process of bringing about the kin(g)-dom of God, where everyone is able to be who they really are and contribute their particular gift.

Clare Law, Fostering Inter-Religious Encounters (FIRE) and Empowerment, Church of St Francis Xavier, Petaling Jaya

Among the Smiling People

The Women's Forum in Kombi

Most Christian Conference of Asia (CCA) delegates, like myself, had never heard of Tomohon—that is until CCA accepted the invitation of the Gereja Maseji Injili di Minahas (GMIM) Church of Indonesia to host the 11th General Assembly. Even travel agents needed to refer to their maps as very few tourists choose to visit North Sulawesi, Indonesia.

The General Assembly was preceded by a Women's Forum, a Youth Forum and a People's Forum. I attended the Women's Forum.

Kombi, with a population of 1,556 people known as 'the smiling people', is a quiet village, nestled in lush green hills, about 450–500 m above sea level and enjoying a comfortable temperature between 23 and 27 degrees. The church was celebrating 154 years since the first people were baptised there on 30 May 1846. To this place of peace, joy, music and generous hospitality came fifty-one women from Thailand, Taiwan, Sri Lanka, Philippines, Myanmar, Malaysia, Korea, Japan, Indonesia, India, Bangladesh, Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand, to reflect on the theme of the Assembly 'Time for Fullness of Life for All'.

Women were made abundantly aware of the relevance of the theme to the lives of church women, as we listened intently to each other's stories, shared each other's pains, celebrated each other's joys and affirmed each other's gifts.

We endeavoured to re-read the Bible with new eyes—from a woman's perspective—and through the exchange of experience and reflection identified and named life-denying forces, which like heavy stones, keep women in bondage.

The Women's Forum urged the churches of Asia and the CCA Assembly to join in solidarity to remove the stones of oppression that bear down heavily on women and called that priority be given:

- to leadership development for women,
- to in-depth study and analysis of the various forms and root causes of violence against women,
- in taking a prophetic stand against globalisation, highlighting its moral, ethical and spiritual implications, and come up with creative alternatives.

Cognisant that women in Asia have tremendous gifts that are yet to be fully tapped, the women's forum also strongly urged the CCA Assembly to ensure equal participation of women in CCA, its member councils and member churches.

For me, Indonesia is no longer just a place of political unrest, of areas where there is conflict between Muslim and Christian, of a diminishing economy where US\$1 equals 8,000 rupiah (half of what it was a few years ago) but a place of real people—farmers (harvesting cloves, coconut, nutmeg, vanilla, cinnamon, coffee, rice, corn, peanuts, carrots and much more—but not apples!), fishermen, furniture makers, fabric makers. We lived in their homes, we saw them at work in the villages, and we worshipped in their churches.

Ruth Silverstone (from Crosslink)



Stories of Struggle

Highlights of the Youth Forum

In line with the theme for the Assembly, the theme for the Youth Forum was 'The Stories of Struggle for the Fullness of Life for All'. So we shared stories of people struggling in our own countries and communities. Hearing and reading these stories introduced us to many struggles that we never knew existed and helped us to understand some of the more publicised issues better. We had a presentation session during one of the evenings to hear stories about the injustice faced by ethnic minorities in Northern India, the struggles of the East Timorese, the Christian-Muslim conflicts in Indonesia and the impact of military rocket experimenting on farming communities in rural Korea. This sharing was even more meaningful because the stories which were

presented were based on personal experiences.

Exposure trips were another part of the program and we got to see the situations of injustice that many Indonesian people live through. Of the six different exposure programs I chose to go to a campsite where 3,700 displaced people from the Maluku islands were 'temporarily' living. They shared their stories of struggle and the dangers they faced while fleeing from the attacks and evading the ambushes of Muslim armies. They told us of the struggles that they continue to go through and what life had been like for them in the seven months since they had arrived at the camp. I was surprised to see and hear that the people held no grudges—all they wanted was to return to their homes. The spirit was

still alive, even in the terrible conditions that these people lived in. They owned nothing, but were willing to share what little they had with their Christian brothers and sisters. The environment within the complex was physically sickening for me. The heat, smell and sights were almost unbearable. We left the campsite with a mission to spread the word of the peoples' struggles to others in our home country. My prayers are always with those people.

Other groups of youth met with oppressed women workers, landless people, gold miners, sex workers and a Muslim minority community. I wish that I could have seen them all because the situations are quite different to anything I could experience in Australia. However, we had an evening



where we were able to present our exposure trips with the other groups. The sharing allowed us to reflect on the economic, political and social issues surrounding these problems but it was also a chance to study the theological meaning that we can draw from these experiences and the responses that we can make.

This was a powerful lesson because I find expressing ideas into actions to be the toughest part when responding to need.

The Youth Statement prepared during the forum detailed the issues that

the youth would like the churches to respond to in the next five years. This was an important part of the pre-Assembly preparations because it ensured that we held discussions and incorporated the opinions and ideas of all the youth. It was a chance to share our vision for the church. I think that moment really helped me to develop my understanding of ecumenism.

I enjoyed the fellowship with the other youth. The times we shared together were very special and the Spirit was constantly with us. The forum was

an opportunity for the youth to meet, bond, learn about CCA and prepare the statement. Over 70 youth from many countries and from all over Indonesia gathered for the forum to worship together, share ideas and learn from one another. Meeting delegates from the Philippines, India, Thailand, Korea and so many other countries was something that I will always cherish. We were all there to learn but we also had so much fun.

Peter Jung, from Australia, a participant at the Youth Forum and a steward at the Assembly

A Feast for All

THE 11TH GENERAL ASSEMBLY will surely be remembered for its food.

The food was supplied and prepared by local GMIM congregations and families and students from vocational schools. It was a mixture of the everyday food of the area plus some special dishes. The most popular food was the grilled fish.

The massive job of catering so much for so many was coordinated by Grace Siwu, the principal of Sekolah Menengah Kejuruan, a home economics school. Locals hearing about the Assembly donated large amounts of supplies, including eggs, coconuts and fish.

On the last night a traditional meal was served, with soup in coconut shells, food on leaves and drink in bamboo cups.



Dancing amidst Suffering

The Bunaken people, a symbol of life and struggle: a reflection from the People's Forum

Night was never something to fear for the people of the tiny island of Bunaken. Night was a time of celebration. They said it was time for their souls and bodies to release from the tiredness of a lengthy day, fighting the sea and heat for some fish that they could exchange for rice. So the people were dancing to joyful music, inviting everybody who was there to join in. Souls and bodies melted in an abundance of joy and hope.

No-one from the People's Forum will ever forget the time when they lived together with the people of Bunaken. The abundance of food, the joyful faces, the hospitality of the people, and the joyful spirit they shared were too great to forget. Life for the people of Bunaken was a festival. Every day was a festival day.

We might find the idea of life as a festival difficult to understand. Most people on the island are fisher-folks. They go to sea in a group of ten to fifteen. Usually they spend about three to seven days at sea, but sometimes they can be away from their families for one month to bring back enough fish to sell to the brokers who have loaned them capital or boats. These brokers usually decide the price themselves. There is no bargaining. On average the fisher-folk only get about 80,000 to 300,000 rupiah a month (approximately US\$10–45). How do you define a festival with such an income? What can be done with this amount for a family with three or four children? Poverty is still a close friend for them. In other words, life is too difficult for them to be defined as festive. And yet that was what we found

in and got from them, the spirit of festival, the spirit of joy they shared with us.

Leaving the island of Bunaken, the participants of the People's Forum shared and discussed their Bunaken stories and experiences and the national reports from each country represented in the forum. The Bunaken people were not the only community who live in poverty—poverty exaggerated by political conspiracies causing horizontal conflicts such as religious and ethnic conflicts, communal violence, gender violence and others. It seemed at times that most of the stories and reports shared were only giving painful feelings and rage. But in further discussions it occurred to us that there was some hope lying in each story shared. So when we were finding it difficult to understand why peo-



Bunaken, a tiny island in North Sulawesi province, is about 30 minutes away by speedboat from Manado. Participants of the People's Forum spent time there experiencing and reflecting on the lives of the people, especially those of the traditional fishers

ple could still dance and sing in that situation I used my woman's heart, not to understand, but to be there with the people.

The life of the Bunaken people to me symbolises life itself. For them, poverty is not something to worry about. This is not because their lives are far from the problem of poverty, but the opposite—it is because poverty has been a close friend, and has been part of their lives. So it is a mistake to understand their dancing as ignorance of being poor. Their dancing and singing is not a kind of opium, it is not a way of hiding their frustration. No—their dancing should be understood as a way of expressing their spirituality, a way of expressing their belief and faith. It is the way most people express their feelings of pain and worry and yet also have hope at the same time. Poverty is not a hindrance to them to be generous and hospitable to others, as abundance of

life should not be understood materialistically. People from industrial societies bring materialism and capitalism that diminishes the hospitality and generosity of these people.

People often understand such spirituality in negative way, hiding their frustration by thinking poor people are lazy. When we understand spirituality as an expression of frustration or laziness, we will be misguided in helping people to get out of their poverty. That is why, as I said earlier, we do not need to try to understand (using our rationality) but simply to be there, completely with the people. Social analysis and theological reflection should be given on the basis of 'being with the people' and not to 'understand the people'. Understanding people does not require us to be with people. Being with people not only requires an integrative understanding of people but also helps us to have better understanding of people.

Therefore, to me, the Bunaken people are a symbol of the life and, at the same time, the struggle of people. Their generosity and hospitality are part of their hope in the midst of suffering and poverty. Do we dare to say that there is no struggle for a better life when a hope is found there? The Bunaken people are dancing amidst their suffering and their struggle for a better life.

The People's Forum was and should be always with them, joining in their dancing amidst people's suffering and people's struggle.

Be with the people!

El. Anna Marsiana

(El. Anna Marsiana works with the Social Welfare Guidance Foundation, a local URM body founded by three churches in Solo, Indonesia. She was a participant in the People's Forum held in Bunaken and Manado, North Sulawesi, on 23–30 May 2000.)

Assembly Documents on the World Wide Web

The Assembly documentation is gradually being added to the CCA website as it becomes available. Visit www.cca.org.hk and go to the General Assembly page for details. One such document, GA06, 'Statements on Public Issues', which expresses the General Assembly's concerns about a number of issues, is now available.

Berita

Berita was the daily newspaper of the General Assembly. Sometimes in sessions more people could be seen reading *Berita* than the required official documents. Its popularity was such that copies were snatched up as soon as they hit the newsstands and people missed out. If you wish to read all about the Assembly (not necessarily the serious parts) or missed some issues, copies are now available on the CCA website—www.cca.org.hk



New Member Churches and Council

At its General Assembly in June CCA admitted into membership three new member churches and one member council:

- the Malabar Independent Syrian Church,
- the Kampuchea Christian Council,
- Gereja Kristen Timor Timur (now Igreja Protestante iha Timor Lorosa'e),
- Kerapatan Gereja Protestan Minalaha (KGPM)

Malabar Independent Syrian Church

THE HEADQUARTERS AND CATHEDRAL of the Malabar Independent Syrian Church is at Thozhiyur, near Kunnankulam in Trichur district, Kerala State, South India.

This ancient as well as traditional church was started in the year 1772 as a part and parcel of the ancient undivided Malankara Syrian Church, which flourished in Kerala during that period. Various events led the non-Roman section of the Syrian Church after the Coonen Cross Oath to consecrate a bishop, namely Abraham Mar Koorilose Metropolitan in the year 1767. Though this Mar Koorilose was approved by people as well as the kings of the period at first, soon Mar Koorilose Metropolitan, consecrated by Mar Gregorioso of Jerusalem was isolated by the King of Cochin Kingdom as well as the church authorities. Thus, after suffering prison and living in confinement in a forest, Mar Koorilose Metropolitan was forced to leave his native country Cochin as well as his beloved church there. So he, with his

brother, arrived at another small country, Malabar, a Muslim populated country at a place called Anjoor in the year 1771. With the help of a Muslim chieftain and some friends Mar Koorilose got enough land to build a beautiful church in the nearest village, Thozhiyur. In the building of the church at Thozhiyur in 1772, a new separate church appeared in the history of the Syrian Christians of Kerala. No variations took place in the doctrines, belief, faith, traditions and fundamental principles exercised in the existing church where Mar Koorilose Metropolitan was consecrated. Now also those fundamental teachings and principles as well as the traditions are followed today by the Malabar Independent Syrian Church, Thozhiyur. This church was also known as Thozhiyur Bishopric or Thozhiyur Church.

'This minute church has had an importance in the history of the Thomas Christians far greater than its numbers would suggest,' says Stephen Neil, in *A History of Christianity in India*, II, p.70. During the reign of the fourth Metropolitan of this church, three bishops were consecrated to the mother church, including H.G. Joseph Mar Dionisius Metropolitan, founder of Orthodox Theological Seminary, Kottayam, in 1816. H.G. Punnathara Mar Dionisius and H.G. Cheppatt Mar Dionisius Metropolitans were the others.

In 1894 the seventh Metropolitan of Thozhiyur Church consecrated H.G. Titus I to Mathoma Church. The Mar

Thoma Syrian Church helped this small church to consecrate its metropolitans. Many Christians in India are unaware of the church and its contribution to the history of the church in India.

The church became independent when unfortunately one of the metropolitans of the Ancient Malankara Church in 1857 filed a civil case against this small church and its metropolitan for its properties. In 1863 the Madras High Court passed a judgment that the Ancient Thozhiyur Church was an independent Syrian Church in Malabar and that other church authorities had no right upon this church.

The Malabar Independent Syrian Church has never been a large church and to this day retains something of the atmosphere of its origins as a band of disciples around a bishop. The current strength is above 25,000 members. It is organised into twelve parishes, each with its own building and is served by eleven priests and one deacon. (In addition there are two congregations in Tamil Nadu, at Madras and Coimbatore).

Sunday schools, youth leagues, women's fellowships function in each parish. The Youth League publishes a monthly magazine, *Kunjbadukalude Velicham*.

MISC runs four schools. The first upper primary school started in 1848. The Mar Koorilose Mission Hospital began in 1972 at Thozhiyur and has fifty beds with a laboratory, x-ray facilities and an operating theatre.

The general assembly of NCCI held in 1996 at Nagpur took a favorable decision to approve the church as one of the member churches.

Kampuchea Christian Council

THE KAMPUCHEA CHRISTIAN COUNCIL, formed by a number of different Cambodian Christian churches and church-related organisations, is the only ecumenical body now functioning in Cambodia. KCC was officially formed after adopting its constitution on 6–7 August 1998 in Phnom Penh by representatives of different Cambodian churches and organisations that had been associating with CCA and WCC for a number of years.

Following its formal structure KCC gained registration with the Ministry of Religions Affairs of the Cambodian Government.

Churches/denominations members of KCC are :

- Cambodian Baptist Convention,
- Kampuchea Independent Churches,
- Cambodian Christian Youth Association,
- France Methodist Church in Cambodia,
- Cambodian Methodist Church,
- Cambodian Church of Christ.

Altogether, there are about 15,000 Christians as members of these different denominations.

Igreja Protestante iha Timor Lorosa'e

ALTHOUGH GKTT had been a member of WCC since 1994, it was not a member of CCA directly, although it was indirectly through membership in PGI from 1989 to 2000. Now that East Timor has become an independent country IPTL has also become an independent church.

The church was founded in 1988, and has a total membership of 30,000. It has seventy-five churches in over thirteen districts of East Timor. It has forty pastors.

(See also the the account of this church's meeting on page 40.)

Kerapatan Gereja Protestan Minahasa

KERPATAN GEREJA PROTESTAN MINAHASA (KGPM) or the Assembly of the Minahasa Protestant Congregations was first organised on 21 April 1933 as an indigenous church in the Minahasa area of Indonesia. This church was founded in the spirit of promoting a self-governing church by the local people, which was free from the influence of the Dutch colonial government at that time. The Protestant Church in the Netherlands Indies at that time was not happy with this move.

KGPM understands itself as a struggling church in hope. The overarching theme of KGPM is: 'Christ in nationalism, nationalism in Christ'. It is believed that Christ is the Lord of all nations and all creations. Historically, this theme inspired and motivated the Christian reformers in Minahasa to be involved in the struggle for independence and freedom of the nation. It is believed that the indigenous people of Indonesia, with its different ethnic, cultures and religious backgrounds should walk and work together towards a social transformation where justice, peace and integrity of creation will be fulfilled in Indonesia. This implies that the church should work together to express the unity of the church and to work with people of other faiths to address the crucial issues in the community, especially issues related to morality, law su-

premac, justice, human rights and democracy. It is crucial for the church to develop a solid foundation for contextual theologies and spiritual formation among the members.

KGPM has 50,017 members in 176 parishes and about 100 ministers and 1,697 lay workers. It runs several schools and is involved in some community development works, especially in the area of home industry, credit union, agriculture and fishery.



New members welcomed into membership

GENERAL ASSEMBLY



Display showing locations of member churches and councils



Presidential thanks to Richard Siwu



Lunchtime recital



Informal discussion in the outdoor dining area



Indonesian students tent at the back of the hall



Tight security for the presidential visit



Stewards helping with the documentation



Traditional warriors at the opening ceremony

Towards New Thrusts and a New Structure for the CCA

Introduction

The following is the result of nearly three years of work and discussion at various levels and through various leadership bodies and appointed committees in the life of the Christian Conference of Asia (CCA). Noting the suggestions that were made by the Colombo Assembly in 1995 on matters related to 'new thrusts and structure' for the CCA, the General Committee at its meeting in Hong Kong in May 1997 set in motion a process of 'clustering' the program work of the CCA. A year later at the meeting of the Executive Committee in Hong Kong in May 1998, an Ad Hoc Committee on Clustering was formed to assess and consolidate the process of clustering that was already in motion, and to suggest, if appropriate, a possible revision of the program structure of the CCA.

After several meetings and months of work, the Ad Hoc Committee on Clustering submitted a report to the General Committee at its meeting in Kerala, India, in November 1998 that clearly indicated a need for a more encompassing review of 'vision and structure' and the imperative to develop more precisely a proposal for 'new thrusts and a new structure' for the CCA that might be presented to the General Assembly for consideration. With minor modifications, the General Committee adopted the proposals of the Ad Hoc Committee on Clustering and appointed an Ad Hoc Committee on Vision and Structure to prepare a more specific proposal that could be presented for the consideration of the General Assembly. The General Committee also instructed staff to circulate the proposal to member churches and councils for their initial comment and reactions, and asked the Ad Hoc Committee on Vision and Structure to bear such comments and reactions in mind in drafting their final proposal. Because the proposals required some constitutional amendments, the General Committee de-

cidated that the proposals be discussed by the Constitutional Review Committee as well so that if agreeable they could be incorporated in the proposals for constitutional amendments to be brought to the General Assembly. The Executive Committee was authorised by the General Committee to review the final proposals of the Ad Hoc Committee on Vision and Structure and endorse its presentation to member churches and councils and to the General Assembly after fulfilling all the requirements of constitutional provisions. With minor corrections, the proposal was adopted by the 11th General Assembly in Tomohon on 1 June 2000.

Feliciano V. Cariño

I. Enduring Vision, Abiding Mandates

'Believing that the purpose of God for the church in Asia is life together in a common obedience of witness to the mission of God in the world, the CCA exists as an organ and a forum of continuing cooperation among churches and national Christian bodies in Asia within the framework of the wider ecumenical movement.'

Over forty years since the Christian Conference of Asia (CCA) was constituted in Prapat, Indonesia, these words that now appear as the opening lines of its 'purpose' have defined the basis on which it was founded and the vision towards which its whole life and work moves. The salient points and constitutive elements of this vision are clear. First, it is **of** and **for life** of the church in Asia that is lived and shared **together**. Second, it is of and for the **mission** of the church in Asia that is not its own but one that is **of God** and is therefore grounded in acknowledgment of and engagement in a common obedience of witness to God's mission. Third, the CCA is

servant of this vision of the church and exists as an organ and a forum of continuing cooperation among churches and national Christian bodies. Fourth, in its service to the churches and Christian bodies in Asia, the CCA is to live and work within the framework of the **wider ecumenical movement**. And fifth, in its effort to manifest common obedience and life together, it is to seek to bring about the **equal participation** of women, men, youth, clergy and laity in church and society.

In the pursuit of this vision, it has laid down and developed objectives that embody its abiding mandates. On the one hand, these abiding mandates are essential to its 'enduring vision' and purpose; on the other, they are to provide openness and responsiveness to the changing and specific issues and challenges in the life of the church and of society in Asia. The Colombo Assembly of the CCA (June 1995) stated these abiding mandates in several clusters of objectives and functions.

- A. Basic to its mandate is the task of constantly posing before the churches in Asia the issue of the unity of the church and of providing a vehicle by which this unity is manifested through joint action among them. A primary expression of this mandate is the task of developing mutual awareness, fellowship and sharing among the churches in the region and promoting common study and action in fields of common interest.
- B. A second dimension of its mandate is the task of helping to enable and equip the churches and Christian bodies in the region in their life and in their various ministries. The CCA is to assist in enabling and equipping individual Christians, churches and Christian communities to respond more fully to and fulfil God's mission in the world. It is also to help in the development of more effective Christian responses to changing situations and issues in the life of church and society.
- C. A third dimension of its mandate has to do with the task of providing a vehicle for the development and engagement of the churches in ecumenical mission and witness in the life of society. It is to help in providing constructive and critical analytical insight into

crucial issues of economic, social and political life, and in developing ways by which the churches in cooperation with each other and with others in society can express responsibility in regard to these issues of common life.

- D. Its mandate, finally, involves a regional and a contextual task. It is to encourage and help develop Asian contributions to Christian thought, worship and action throughout the world. More specifically, it is to develop and promote relationships with peoples of other faiths in Asia and engage in dialogue with them concerning faith and the common life. Above all, it is to be in Asia, in other words, to be a regional ecumenical organisation that is rooted in the life, the culture, the economic, social, and political realities of Asia, and the spiritual and theological gifts of the churches in Asia.

II. Changing Realities: The Pressure for New Thrusts and Structure

Over the years, throughout its history, the CCA has tried to keep faith with this enduring vision, its abiding mandates and the tasks that these entail. Amidst changing realities, conditions and capabilities, it has also embodied them in programs and structures that it has from time to time reviewed and changed. It is in fact an indication of its dynamism and its effort to be responsive to the times that in its brief history of just over forty years, it has many times reviewed and revised its programs and adjusted its structure accordingly. Indeed, in nearly all of its assemblies since its founding in Prapat in 1957, beginning with its inaugural assembly in Kuala Lumpur in 1959 to its last assembly in Colombo in 1995, some revision of program and structure, on many occasions very encompassing ones, have been undertaken. It has also revised its constitution many times. It amended its original constitution in Singapore in 1973, where its name was changed from East Asia Christian Conference (EACC) to CCA. It amended its constitution again in Seoul in 1985. In 1995, in Colombo, it had an extraordinary assembly to come up with a constitution that is almost entirely new. It also received a proposal 'Towards a New Thrust and Structure for the CCA' that it asked to be tried

and tested in the next five years so that it can be presented again at the assembly in the year 2000. As this assembly comes upon us, drastically changing realities, conditions and challenges that impinge upon the life of the church and the ecumenical movement once again put pressure upon the CCA to explore new thrusts and look at a new structure. These become even more challenging as we face the pressure of a new century and a new millennium. The CCA is not alone in facing this pressure. All over the ecumenical world, in regional, national and local councils of churches everywhere, the pressure is felt for review and renewal perhaps in a manner that the modern ecumenical movement has not felt before. This pressure comes from several inter-related issues and areas of current ecumenical life that have become common in the life of ecumenical bodies everywhere:

- A. It comes first from the need and the imperative for a greater clarity concerning the program profile and priorities of ecumenical bodies and how ownership of these are shared with and related to their respective members and constituencies. It is clear in the experience of various ecumenical bodies that the need for and the process of review of programs and structure are not a matter of technical or managerial adjustments primarily. It involves a deeper and more comprehensive process of identifying needs, perspectives and priorities, and redefining roles and relationships. It involves a more comprehensive process of projecting goals and visions not only of what needs to be done but also of what has been done elsewhere, and not only of who will do them but also with whom they will be done and how best they could be done. This happens moreover in a situation where a wide variety of issues, challenges and relationships, both old and new, come upon the church and the ecumenical movement from nearly all directions and in equally intense ways.
- B. It comes secondly from the increasing recognition of the centrality of relationships and communication as vital, if not constitutive, dimensions of ecumenical life. This involves relationships and communication at four important levels:

1. There are the fundamental and primordial relationships and communication with the member churches and constituencies of ecumenical bodies. In the case of the CCA, this means a stronger sense of involvement and participation of all of its member councils and churches in its life and work.
2. There are the relationships and communication with a large number of organised manifestations of various aspects of ecumenical life and work in local, national, regional and world levels. The numbers and character of these organisations have grown considerably since the first ecumenical organisations were formed some fifty years ago. Relationships and communication with them have become a much more complex and demanding dimension of ecumenical life in recent years and more so in years to come.
3. There are the relationships and communication with Christian churches and bodies that are presently not members of the established ecumenical organisations. Of special note in this regard are relationships with the Roman Catholic Church and with Evangelical and Pentecostal churches and groups.
4. There are the relationships with secular or non-church bodies, e.g. non-governmental organisations, that are engaged in similar work of social engagement, and with whom or through whom common work could be done.

It is in these contexts of relationships and the work of communication that they require that ecumenical bodies are being asked to look at their program profiles and priorities not only in relation to their respective mandates but also to what each is to do in the light of what the other is doing. This pressure of relationships takes place precisely within a wide network of churches, Christian bodies and other organisations locally, nationally, regionally, and worldwide that often work side-by-side each other and often cover similar if not identical grounds. The challenge of a more comprehensive and inclusive ecumenical fellowship that cuts across and involves wider areas of relationships and communication is what is in-

volved in this dimension of program and structure review.

C. The third is related to the second. It has to do with the increasing pressure of a shared ownership of the life and work of ecumenical bodies by their primary members. It has become increasingly clear and strongly noted that central to the issue of program and structure in the CCA is the issue of a shared ownership of its program, activities and structure by its member churches and councils. This means above all that program and structure must be geared to what it means for the CCA 'to grow together' with its members in Asia. Among many things, this involves a number of issues of critical importance for the immediate future:

1. It involves issues that have to do with developing a program profile and structure that are more relevant and responsive to the needs and priorities of the churches and councils. In short, ecumenical activities should not become 'too distanced' from their ongoing life and concerns.
2. It involves issues of effective and more meaningful participation of member churches and councils in the processes by which programs are determined and implemented. In this sense, programs and structure of ecumenical bodies like the CCA should be set up in such a manner that they do not serve and express only the needs and priorities of particular churches or denominations but of as wide a spectrum as possible of all who are members and constituents.
3. It involves very critical ecclesiological issues that have to do with the nature and authority of a council or a conference of churches and what may be properly done by them in relation to what the churches themselves do. When and in what manner, for example, can a council of churches speak for the churches or do anything on their behalf? The issue is particularly sensitive and difficult where issues of doctrine and theology or of social policy are involved.

D. The fourth is the pressure that comes from the enor-

mous changes that are happening in the economic, social and political life of the world, in the life of the churches, and in the ecumenical situation itself. All over the world, and in all aspects of life, the changes are not only astounding but are also happening at such a pace that put pressure on churches and ecumenical bodies to constantly review programs, reflect and revise priorities, and respond to new challenges and realities. The ideological climate has changed. New geopolitical and economic arrangements have emerged. The globalisation of life in various levels has happened in ways that are unprecedented and pose challenges to church and ecumenical life that have not been faced before. A new world of communication and information has emerged that dazzles in its efficiency but is baffling and frightening in its consequences and threats to various levels of human and international relations. There are emerging new areas of international conflict and of war and peace. The religious situation is no less perplexing and challenging. There are new theological and spiritual movements both within and without the churches, new religions or religious manifestations in church and in society that exist side by side with the older and more established ones. All of these and many more conditions of change are anticipated to accelerate as the turn to the twenty-first century takes place, providing new opportunities but also new dilemmas and threats to human life and social relations.

E. A fifth common factor that in many ways underlies all of the others is the receding financial and economic base of ecumenical life. There is in fact an economic crisis that is happening all over the ecumenical world that is changing and imposing new imperatives of life and work for the ecumenical movement. This crisis is borne by a number of economic realities that are part of the ecumenical situation of our time:

1. It is now clear that there is a recession of the support for ecumenical life from the churches and related bodies in the 'North'. It is equally clear that this recession of 'old' sources is not tempo-

rary. The recession in fact is not abating and there are no signs that it will subside in the foreseeable future. Neither are new ones replacing the old sources of ecumenical support. This economic crisis in short is bound to get worse before it begins to get better. The times when we can say 'support is available if only we had the right programs and proposals' are over.

2. In this context, the CCA and the ecumenical movement in general can no longer expect, especially in the long term, that the rich churches of the North will continue to be their main supporters.
3. At the same time, it is inconceivable and unrealistic to expect, especially in the short term, that the CCA and the ecumenical movement in Asia in their present form and structure can be supported entirely by contributions from its member churches and councils and from alternative Asian sources of support.
4. Meanwhile, whether it is admitted or not, it is becoming clear that the CCA and other ecumenical bodies do not receive the same level of serious attention or priority that they once received.
5. It has become imperative, as a result of all of these, that some initial but clear and decisive move to gradually wean the CCA as an expression of the ecumenical movement in Asia from its financial dependence upon supporting bodies from the 'North' must take place. Not only a theological and cultural but also an economic transformation in other words must take place in the life of the CCA so that it becomes more fully rooted in the life of the Asian churches and Christian bodies, not only in theological orientation and perspective but also in financial and material support. This has very significant structural consequences simply because ecumenical structures in Asia, as in other parts of the Third World, have been 'styled' on the basis and presumption of the availability of strong support from the North. Structural changes are needed as the CCA moves away from this financial dependence.

E. Thus finally, and in the sixth place, there is the pressure to do things more efficiently and more effec-

tively. Among others, this pressure means the following:

1. Giving sharper focus to activities, and avoiding duplications.
2. Assigning tasks more precisely and obtaining the greatest amount of productivity from the least deployment of human and material resources.
3. Setting priorities among priorities.
4. Looking for quality rather than quantity.
5. In other words, to do less in order to do more.

III. Guidelines for Structure and Organisation

Bearing in mind its enduring vision and abiding mandates, and noting the changing realities that put pressure upon its life, any program structure of the CCA must be set up around the following guidelines and concerns:

A. It should, firstly, be a program structure that provides space and enable ecumenical action and response to issues and priorities that are defined in relation to the concerns and needs of its member churches, councils and other constituencies. The program structure in short must combine the need to be responsive to critical and dynamically changing issues and priorities and the constitutive demands of responsible relationships and communication with its members. Some of the concerns, issues and priorities around which it must orient its life, centre its priorities and build its relationships in the coming years ahead include the following:

1. The concerns related to the 'ownership' of the ecumenical movement in Asia.
2. The concerns and issues related to the unity of Asian churches and of relationships with other Christian churches, bodies, traditions, and organisations that are currently not members of the CCA, e.g. the Roman Catholic Church and the Evangelical and Pentecostal churches and groups.
3. The issues posed by the religious situation of our time, e.g. of religious plurality and the common

life, of the new manifestations and roles of religions in society, and the challenges of interreligious dialogue and ecumenism, and of Asian spirituality.

4. The needs and concerns related to ecumenical formation and the training of ecumenical enablers.
 5. The need to recognise and deal with issues posed by the diversity of Asian societies, cultures, economic and political structures and experiences and religious traditions. A new style of programming in short that embodies openness to diversity and plurality and flexibility to respond to changing conditions.
 6. The needs of 'subregional' programs and emphases.
 7. The issues and concerns related to solidarity with struggling and suffering people, the poor, the oppressed and the marginalised.
 8. The issues related to the promotion of a more 'inclusive community' and the empowerment of women and youth.
 9. The issues posed by 'globalisation' and the emergence of 'global' community and communication in its economic, social, political and cultural aspects.
 10. The concerns related to the need for 'study and research' in the ecumenical movement
 11. The issues related to education in church and society.
 12. The need for the development and promotion of Asian arts and culture.
- B. It should, secondly, be a program structure that is cost and economics conscious. Even 'visions' and priorities, in other words, must be placed side by side immediately with a 'budget' and the capabilities that are available to attain them. Increasingly, this 'cost and economics consciousness' must be geared to what is available from Asian sources.
- C. It should, thirdly, be a program structure that is more modest and simple than the previous one at the same time that it can enable wider participation of people from member churches and councils in activities

other than in formal committees, task forces and working groups.

- D. It should, fourthly, be a program structure that must be broad enough to embody 'abiding mandates' but open and flexible enough to accommodate changing priorities, organisational needs and priorities, and program emphases that may be undertaken in cooperation and collaboration with other ecumenical organisations, member churches and councils, and other partner bodies.
- E. On matters related to staff, it should, fifthly, be a program structure that is built around a small but competent staff that could work with and enable work in a variety of fields. Versatility, both of mind and of areas of skill and interest, rather than specialisation must be given priority.
- F. In all of these finally, both structure and staff that operates it should embody a 'new style of work' that avoids duplication, enhances collaboration, joint work and networking, and enables the widest participation and involvement of the CCA's constituencies. Both structure and staff in this sense must be inclined towards a greater and more intentional involvement of the member churches and councils and must elicit their assistance and more direct participation in the carrying out of programs and activities.

IV. Actions

In light of all of these, the 11th General Assembly 2000 takes the following actions:

A. Program Structure

A program structure is herewith presented that has the following characteristics in comparison to the previous one:

1. Maintaining the same accountability to member churches and councils through the General Assembly, General Committee and Executive Committee, the present structure reduces the program committees to three from the previous nine pro-

gram committees and six working groups and task forces. The three program area committees oversee and supervise work in the three 'program areas' that are embodied in the abiding mandates of the CCA:

- a. Faith, Mission and Unity
 - b. Justice, International Affairs, Development and Service
 - c. Ecumenical Formation, Gender Justice and Youth Empowerment
2. Each program area however is broad enough to accommodate within it a wide variety of issues and program activities, and adopt as the need arises new or changing emphases.
 3. Each program area will have a program area committee of not less than twelve members. Each 'program field' is to be staffed initially by two executive staff persons and one administrative staff person, with flexibility to employ others, e.g. consultants, technical and program assistants with varying terms of service, whenever there is need and resources to support them.
 4. These three program areas revolve administratively around the General Secretariat which will be responsible for general administration, finance management, coordination, relationships and communication. The General Secretariat will be made up of the General Secretary and two Associate General Secretaries. One Associate General Secretary is for Finance. In view of the importance of communication and relationships that have been stressed above, it is recommended that the second Associate General Secretary should be an Associate General Secretary for Communication and Relationships. It is understood in this recommendation that the task of program and administrative coordination is already and will be the responsibility of the General Secretary. Two administrative staff, one assistant accountant, and one receptionist/messenger will assist the General Secretariat. The Executive Committee will serve as the committee for the General Secretariat.
 5. The structure is conceived flexibly so that its staff complement can be reduced or increased as necessary.

6. The new program structure is diagrammed and summarised in Appendix 1.
7. It is agreed that this proposed program structure be adopted for implementation.

B. Constitutional Amendments

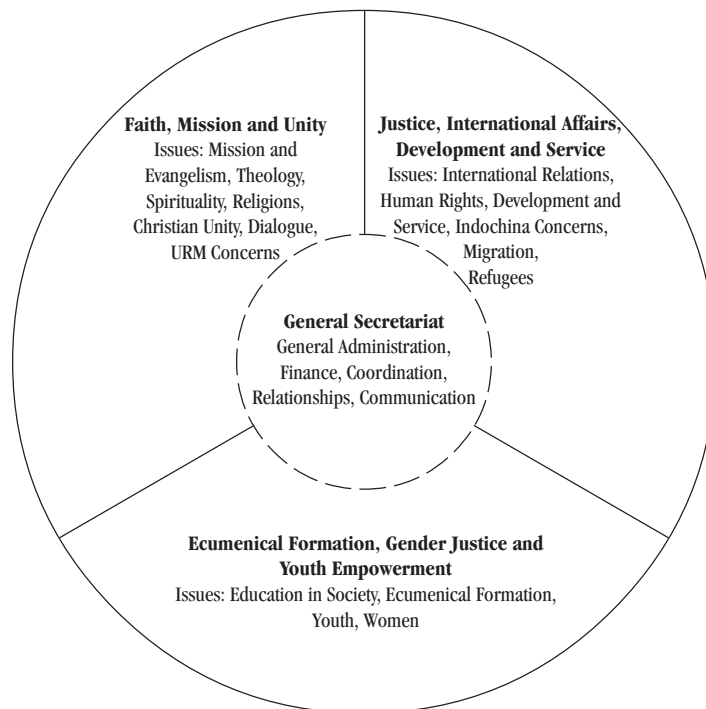
Further, that in order for the new program structure to be implemented the following amendments to the CCA Constitution and Rules and Regulations are adopted:

1. An amendment to Article 9 of the Constitution and its three subsections in such a manner that would incorporate the following points:
 - a. That the names and numbers of the committees should not be listed so that a greater flexibility is provided for in the numbers and areas of concern of the committees.
 - b. That while it is normally the General Assembly that appoints the program committees, provision should be made for the General Committee to make changes if necessary in between meetings of the Assembly.
 - c. That the composition of the committees is adjusted accordingly as needs and priorities are determined.
 - d. Underlying all of these is the basic principle of providing a greater degree of flexibility in the determination of program committees and simplifying the process of changing them in response to changing conditions, priorities, resources and capabilities.
2. An amendment to Article 12.1 and related provisions of the Rules and Regulations so that work related to Communication and Relationships be included in the duties and responsibilities of the General Secretariat.

The final wording of the proposed amendments were drafted in consultation with the Constitutional Review Committee and other parts of the Constitution and Rules and Regulations were revised accordingly in the light of these amendments.

Tomohon, 1 June 2000

Appendix 1: CCA Program Structure



Notes:

I. Committees

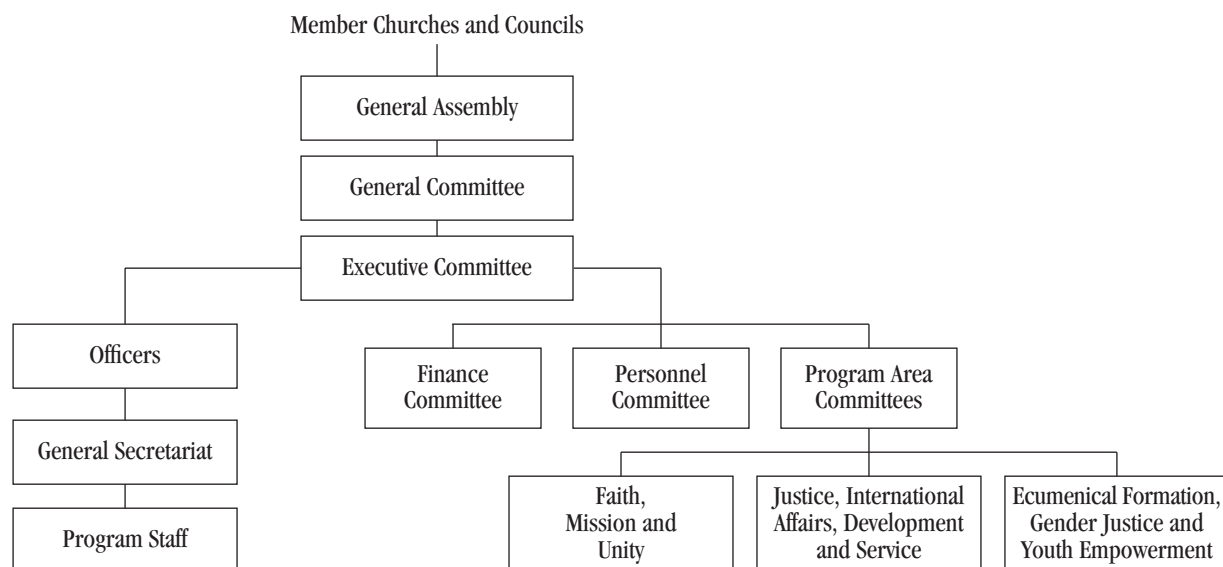
- a. Executive Committee will serve as committee for General Secretariat
- b. A program area committee of not less than twelve for Faith, Mission and Unity
- c. A program area committee of not less than twelve for Justice, International Affairs, Development and Service
- d. A program area committee of not less than twelve for Ecumenical Formation, Gender Justice and Youth Empowerment
- e. Total: Executive Committee of ten, plus three program area committees of not less than thirty-six

II. Staff

- a. Three executive staff for General Secretariat, and two support/administrative staff, one assistant accountant, one receptionist/messenger

- b. Two executive staff for Faith, Mission and Unity, one support/administrative staff
- c. Two executive staff for Justice, International Affairs, Development and Service, plus one support/administrative staff
- d. Two executive staff for Ecumenical Formation, Gender Justice and Youth Empowerment, plus one support/administrative staff
- e. Four service staff: driver, caretaker, cook, 'amah'
- f. A total staff complement of nine executive staff, six support/administrative staff, one assistant accountant, four service staff for a total of twenty
- g. Consultants, interns for programs may be hired as needed; support and service staff to be increased or reduced as necessary.

Appendix 2: CCA Organisational Structure



Asia Conference of Theological Students

The ecumenical movement in transition: concerns and challenges for a new generation

Seventy students, theological faculty members and administrators, and ecumenical leaders participated in the Asia Conference of Theological Students (ACTS) that was held at the Archdiocesan Pastoral Centre, Archdiocese of Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, on 14–19 August 2000

The participants came from nineteen countries from all over Asia and several from Africa, the Pacific, Europe and North America, and represented the major theological schools of the Protestant and Orthodox constituencies of the CCA.

Twelve Catholic students from Catholic theological schools in Indonesia, Malaysia, India, Japan, Korea and the Philippines also attended the

conference as full participants. Sponsored by the Christian Conference of Asia (CCA), planning and support of the conference was shared with the Office of Ecumenical and Inter-religious Affairs of the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences (FABC-OEIA) and the Council of Churches in Malaysia (CCM). CCM was the official host of the Conference. A generous grant from the Council for World Mission (CWM) assisted in covering the travel of participants.

The last gathering of theological students called by CCA took place over forty years ago as part of one of the preparatory meetings that led to the formation of the East Asia Christian Conference (EACC) in 1957. Gather-

ing over forty years later and called to link ecumenical concerns with training for the pastoral ministry and to present ecumenical work as part of 'being church' and therefore part of the work of those who serve the churches in various forms of ministry, ACTS 2000, as the conference was referred to by one of its participants, met in plenaries and discussion groups that revolved around four major presentations:

- A presentation on the theme of the conference, 'The Ecumenical Movement in Transition: Concerns and Challenges for a New Generation', by Dr Konrad Raiser, the General Secretary of the World Council of Churches.



- A presentation on 'Theology and Ecumenical Life in a Global Era: Concerns, Challenges and Coalitions' by Dr Damayanthi M.A. Niles of the Christianity in Asia Project of the University of Cambridge, UK.
- A presentation on 'The Challenges and Imperatives of Christian Unity towards the Twenty-first Century: Lessons and Perspectives' by Fr Dr K.M. George, the Principal of the Orthodox Theological Seminary in Kottayam, India.
- A presentation on 'God's People amidst All of God's People: Ecumenism and the Challenge of Religious Plurality' by Fr Thomas Michel, Executive Secretary of the FABC-OEIA and Secretary for Interreligious Dialogue of the Jesuit Curia in Rome.

Students led the worship and Bible study of the conference, and shared national and subregional reports on the 'state of the oikoumene' in group and plenary discussions. A welcome message to the conference was given by Bishop Lawrence Thienchai, the Episcopal Chair of FABC-OEIA, in which he expressed the hope that the conference would 'lay the foundations' that will 'see the real and tangible beginnings of unity amongst all Christians in Asia'. A welcome dinner hosted by the CCM was attended by leaders and representatives of the major church bodies and congregations in Kuala Lumpur.

Dr Raiser, Dr Feliciano V. Cariño, General Secretary of the CCA, Dr Herman Shastri, General Secretary of CCM, and Anthony Row, a lay leader of the Methodist Church of Malaysia (one of the new CCA Presidents), were received by the Prime Minister of Ma-

laysia, Dr Mahathir Mohamad, at the Office of the Prime Minister in Putrajaya during the conference.

ACTS Speakers

Prepare for the Day

Bishop Lawrence Thienchai, the Episcopal Chair of the FABC's Office of Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs (OEIA), urged the delegates to prepare for the day when they will be 'at the forefront of your church's activities, especially in assisting in the evolution of its theological thoughts and commitments'. This, the bishop said, would be the 'long-term effect' of the conference, which 'aims to lay the foundation for the future', and which Bishop Thienchai prays, 'will see the real and tangible beginnings of unity amongst all Christians in Asia'.

Quoting from Pope John Paul II's *Ut Unum Sint*, Bishop Thienchai reminded participants that the mandate of the Lord that 'they might be one' (John 17:20) 'is the basis not only of the duty, but also the responsibility before God of God's people' to foster relationships across Christian denominations. How, then, can we remain divided as Christians since 'division openly contradicts the will of Christ'? Thienchai saw hope in efforts such as ACTS as 'the little bit' which each person can do to 'help foster Christian unity'.

Building Networks

Dr Feliciano Cariño, the General Secretary of CCA, intimated that the last time ACTS was held, it was 1956, when he himself was a participant as a student of theology. 'It is of great importance to note that so many of the



Dr Feliciano Cariño

theological students who participated in that conference have provided some of the more important leadership of the ecumenical movement in Asia,' he continued. Thus, he hoped that the present ACTS would 'provide initiative towards the formation of networks of pastoral and theological work in the region' and that it would also 'provide occasion to engage theological students towards the discussion and understanding of issues, concerns and perspectives of the ecumenical movement and to consider commitment to ecumenical life and thought in the region and worldwide as a vital part of being Church in Asia'.

Inclusiveness

'A commitment to inclusiveness and to overcoming any form of discrimination' will mark much of the ecumenical work of the new generation, asserted Dr Konrad Raiser, the General Secretary of the World Council of

Churches, during his keynote address. He continued, 'The effort to build inclusive communities has been a distinctive feature of ecumenical discussion with regard to the gender issue, the place of persons with disabilities, the recognition of indigenous cultures, etc.' He raised a caution however and suggested that 'with regard to particular moral concerns, especially around human sexuality, the ecumenical discussion seems to touch limits of its commitment to inclusiveness'. Raiser also pointed out another area which has been 'controversially discussed' namely, 'the relationship with people of other faiths and their place in the Christian understanding of God's will for human society and history'. He suggested that 'the



Dr Konrad Raiser

crucial test' of the ecumenical agenda would be how 'the criterion of inclusiveness is being applied to the understanding of Christian unity and the inclusive scope of the ecumenical movement'.

You Don't Dialogue with Violent Criminals

How is dialogue possible in today's social climate? Christians pointedly ask, 'How can you engage in dialogue with people who are burning your churches, raping your sisters, massacring your villages and killing your clergy?' 'You don't,' asserted Fr Thomas Michel, in responding to questions raised during his address at ACTS. Jesuit Father Michel, an internationally renowned scholar of Islam and proponent of interreligious dialogue, then went on to say, 'You don't dialogue with violent criminals, with people who have given themselves over to hatred, just as St Paul did not dialogue with the fanatics and the murderers of Ephesus.' Having analysed St Paul's two-year stopover at Ephesus as 'raising the whole question of interreligious dialogue for Christians' Michel suggested that 'dialogue presumes good will and a certain level of openness to others. You don't dialogue with an angry mob. You try to avoid them, just as Paul avoided the mob by staying out of the city centre in Ephesus.'

The very down-to-earth and pragmatic Michel suggested that when the streets are filled with young men armed with heavy weapons, 'you don't engage in dialogue'. Instead, 'you gather your children and whatever possessions you can carry on your back and you flee the area'. He then

went on to say that unfortunately recent history has shown that 'it is the reasonable and peace-loving people who flee their homes and become refugees, often abandoning their possessions to the looters and scavengers. In such conflicts, it is not the meek who inherit the land, but the violent.'

Fr Michel was quick to remind that 'the vast majority of our neighbours, whether they are Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists or Confucianists, want, just as we do, peaceful, harmonious societies. They are not violent and they do not hate,' he asserted, speaking from his many years of personal engagement in interfaith work in nearly every country across the globe. 'We do them an injustice when we say that Hindus are anti-Christian or that Muslims are violence-prone, just as we know that others do us an injustice when they say that Christians are only interested in making converts and money.' He, therefore, cautioned that we do not get into some kind of 'persecuted Christians' complex, just because priests have been killed or churches burned. Moreover, he pointed out, 'Christians are not always innocent victims, but sometimes perpetrators of violence towards other.' Substantiating this, Michel said that 'if we include Ireland, Bosnia, Kosovo, Iraq, Rwanda and Chechnia, we must confess that it is probably Christians who are worldwide the greatest perpetrators of violence towards the followers of other religious groups.'

Fr Michel challenged the delegates to 'dreaming' and 'having a vision of the future'. For, Michel adds, 'Those who don't have a vision of the future become passive victims of history, not its shapers.'

Climate Change in Asia

Seeking a spiritual commitment to ecological balance

Spiritual decline is a major factor in ecological imbalance in Asia, according to a recent international interreligious meeting. The consultation, 'A Religious Response to Climate Change in Asia', was held 11–15 July at the Ecumenical Christian Centre in Bangalore, India.

The participants at the conference called on their religious followers worldwide to reject consumerism. 'Climate change is as much an issue of diminishing spirituality as it is an issue of pollution, deforestation and depletion of natural resources,' the thirty Christian, Buddhist and Muslim participants said in their final statement.

The consultation, organised by CCA in collaboration with the Ecumenical Christian Centre, drew participants from Bangladesh, Hong Kong, India, the Philippines, South Korea, Sri Lanka, Taiwan and Thailand. Elias Crisostomo Abramides and Jutta

Steigerwald, representing the World Council of Churches Climate Change Program, also participated.

Participants voiced concern over the exploitation of Asia's natural resources for the benefit of a few industrialised nations and 'the consumerist and highly polluting lifestyles of peoples of developed countries'.

'Climate change,' they asserted, 'is as much an issue of inequality in patterns of trade and consumption as it is an issue of increase of greenhouse gas emissions.'

They also called for transformation of 'the individualistic-consumerist psyche into an ecologically sensitive and socially responsive spirituality'.

The conference recommended that by adopting the principles of simplicity and harmony taught by various faiths, 'we can set ourselves free from the market-driven impulse to consume and exploit nature'.

The consultation urged churches to observe one Sunday a year as 'Eco-Sunday' and urged people of other religions to dedicate one day as 'Environment Day'.

It recommended educating students on environmental concerns and noted that the media have a vital role to play in creating awareness on ecological issues.

The participants affirmed that the consultation helped them move 'one step forward in seeking in each of our various faiths the ethical and spiritual paradigm which will guide and empower our united ecological endeavour'.

Exploring indigenous wisdom and other models of development 'is far more eco-sustainable than what is being endorsed and imposed upon our countries through unequal treaties by big powerful developed countries,' they said. →



National Workshop on Gender Awareness and HIV/AIDS

The Kampuchea Council of Churches sponsored a national workshop on Gender Awareness and HIV/AIDS on 22–25 August 2000 held at the Ecumenical Centre in Phnom Penh. It was attended by fifty-two participants—twenty-nine women and twenty-three men. There were seven male pastors, three female pastors, five laymen, fifteen laywomen, twelve male youth and ten female youth. The workshop was an effort of KCC to address the resistance to changes in gender relations amidst the socioeconomic change that is bringing new opportunities to Cambodians, and the peril of a rapidly increasing incidence of HIV/AIDS in recent years.

Gender is a new concept! And to talk about sex is a taboo! Understanding of HIV/AIDS is highly clouded! It was certainly a challenging experience for the participants, who came from Phnom Penh and different provinces of Cambodia, to struggle with understanding gender dynamics, HIV/AIDS

and related topics. They were led by Pastor Corazon Tabing-Reyes from CCA and Dr Erlinda Senturias, with the help of Rev. Smak Sotheara, KCC General Secretary, as translator. However, as the group moved from one topic to another, a more relaxed atmosphere was fostered and openness to new learning paved its way.

Topics included:

- gender dynamics: differentiating sex from gender, sex roles from gender roles,
- agencies that genderise roles,
- impact of gender stereotyping on daily lives: gender issues,
- Bible study on partnership of women and men in community (Genesis 1:26–28),
- strategy for building inclusive community,
- breaking the barrier of gender stereotyping (through stories of the Syro-Phoenician woman from the Bible, from Uganda and from Thailand),

- sexual dimension of our experience
- experience of HIV/AIDS and the experience of faith
- sharing messages to others

Daily worship was led by Pastor Ngeth Sambo, Pastor Eang Sun Heng and Pastor Oum Sovy, with the young people leading in the singspiration.

During the evaluation, a participant said, ‘I may not understand 100 per cent of what we studied here. Only around 50 per cent. I may not be able to organise a workshop like this but I will preach and do Bible studies on these topics.’

Rev. Smak plans to translate the modules to Khmer for their use as they will continue to study these topics in their local churches.

Hopefully, with these new evangelists of KCC, the church can affirm its message of partnership of women and men in inclusive community and help young people make informed decisions about relationships.

Corazon Tabing-Reyes

The consultation urged people of all religions to respond to the climate change issue by first repenting for destructive attitudes toward nature and fellow beings.

Elias Crisostomo Abramides, a resource person from Argentina, explained during the consultation how climate change is a threat to God’s creation.

‘The pollution of the atmosphere and its consequent global warming and climate change are one of the greatest risks challenging the continuity of life on earth.’

According to Abramides, the solution to harmful climate change will involve ethics and religion as well as politics and economics. The ‘intimate ethical and deeply religious implica-

tions’ of climate change are ‘a matter of justice, equity and love,’ he said.

Prawate Khid-arn from CCA said that CCA had organised the conference to raise awareness on climate change, encourage people to do something about it and help create environmentally sensitive religious communities in Asia.

Philip Mathew

Deep Concerns

Member councils respond to disturbing events in Asia

A number of member councils of the Christian Conference of Asia have issued statements of their concern at recent events in Asia.

- **Indonesia** A statement from the Communion of Churches in Indonesia and a letter to the President of Indonesia from the National Christian Council in Japan regarding the human tragedy in Maluku.
- **The Philippines** A statement from the National Council of Churches in the Philippines denouncing violence in that country.
- **India** A statement from the National Council of Churches in India and the Catholic Bishops' Conference of India on atrocities against Christians and other minorities.
- **Sri Lanka** A statement of the National Christian Council of Sri Lanka on the constitution-making process.
- **Korea** A prayer for peaceful reunification from the National Council of Churches in Korea (NCCCK) and the Korean Christians Federation (KCF), and a report of a visit to North Korea from the Hong Kong Christian Council

Statement of the Communion of Churches in Indonesia on the Maluku Human Tragedy

Addressed to:

- *the Government of the Republic of Indonesia,*
- *churches and Christians in Indonesia,*
- *world ecumenical bodies,*
- *the United Nations.*

ON BEHALF OF THE WHOLE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY IN INDONESIA, the Executive Board of the Communion of Churches in Indonesia expresses its utmost deep concern on the human tragedy which has been happening and has at the moment developed to a level of a crime against humanity.

Various approaches and efforts have been made to overcome the con-

flict in Maluku. The latest one, which is now being carried out, is the state of civil emergency since 27 June 2000. However, this effort has not brought about any solution. On the contrary the situation continues to deteriorate and has reached the very worst and is threatening the very existence of the Christian community in Maluku. It includes wide social and political implications for the continuation of the process of reformation and the existence of the unitary Republic of Indonesia.

Some of the facts which indicate that the state of civil emergency is not effectively stopping the violence in Maluku are as follows:

- At the moment this statement was being made, we received a report that Waai, a Christian village of Salahutu District, Ambon, was being destroyed by mortar bombs and fire arrows. Hundreds of people's houses, the two church buildings (Protestant and Roman Catholic), the elementary and secondary school buildings, the village clinic and the police resident complex were all destroyed. The Security Forces could not enter the area because they were blocked by the so-called 'white group'.
- At the moment this draft statement was being typed, at 19.30 (Indonesian Western Time), we received an

SOS call from the PGI Representative of Maluku, the Amboina Episcopate (Episcopacy), the PGPI and PII, to evacuate all Christians from Maluku for security reasons.

- The shootings by snipers of civilians, including women and children, resulted in tens dead and injured
- On 4 July 2000 from 05.00 to 14.00 (Indonesian Eastern Time) an attack was carried out by the 'white group' supported by TNI/POLRI indisplinary and has scorched to the earth the Christian housing complex in the villages of Wailela, Rumah Tiga and Poka, including the Pattimura University.
- Just before this statement was going to be released, we were still receiving information telling that a number of villages and Christian communities were under a threat of being scorched.

Taking the facts and data, described above, and events before the implementation of the civil emergency into account, we conclude the following:

- The communities in Maluku, Christian as well as Muslim, have been the victims of a conflict of the political elite who manipulate religious sentiments.
- The escalation and spreading of violence against humanity, in spite of the civil emergency implementation, was a direct result of the coming of jihad troops into Maluku under the support of the TNI/POLRI indisplinary. So, not only were the reconciliation efforts which had been made before being disrupted, but also such efforts are barred and rendered meaningless in the present condition.

The attacks targeted at the Christian communities in Maluku have caused the loss of human lives, properties and social relationships.

There are indications that this movement will continue with the goal to eradicate the presence of Christians and the church in Maluku, which is one of the oldest churches in Asia. These facts have strongly bothered and annoyed not only and particularly the Christians in Maluku but also the whole Indonesian Christian people in general.

Based on the above, we have taken the standpoints as follows:

- As an integral part of the people of Indonesia we, PGI (the Indonesian Communion of Churches), which covers seventy-six synods of churches in Indonesia with tens of millions of members, plead to the people of Indonesia to see the Maluku tragedy as a national problem that could threaten the unity and coherence of the people of Indonesia.
- We express the solidarity of all churches in Indonesia and their church members with the whole community in Maluku, who suffer very deeply, with those still hanging on to their places or those who were forced to flee their homes and villages and run into the mountains and forests or to the other islands. We call on all Christians in Indonesia to directly show their solidarity in the form of prayers and visible actions with the communities in Maluku who are the victims of injustice.
- With this Christian solidarity, we ask all to strengthen the national unity of Indonesia, comprising all ethnic,

religious, racial and social groups, which is an absolute necessity for the rising of the country from its fall.

- We demand that all forms of violence be stopped immediately, that the actors, such as the jihad troops, be arrested and expelled from the areas of conflict (Maluku and North Maluku) and that external rioters be prevented from entering Maluku.
- We demand that the Government (of Indonesia) take concrete steps to discipline members of TNI/POLRI who take sides with the conflicting parties.
- We call on world Christian organisations (World Council of Churches, World Alliance of Reformed Churches, Lutheran Church World Federation, the Catholic Church etc.) to demand the Government of Indonesia and the United Nations to ensure the right to life of Indonesian Christians in accordance with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of the United Nations.
- We call upon the United Nations and the Government of Indonesia to jointly watch and monitor the implementation of the state of civil emergency in Maluku to prevent further annihilation of human beings in Maluku.

Jakarta, 8 July 2000

The Communion of Churches in Indonesia

Rev. Dr Natan Setiabudi, General Chairman

Rev. Dr Richard M. Daulay, Vice General Secretary

A Human Tragedy: A Letter to the President of Indonesia from National Christian Council in Japan

*Mr President Abdurrahman Wahid
The Republic of Indonesia
Letter of Request on Maluku Human
Tragedy*

Dear Mr President Abdurrahman Wahid:

ON BEHALF OF THE NATIONAL CHRISTIAN COUNCIL IN JAPAN, we express our deepest sadness and utmost concern about the human tragedy that has been happening as a result of 'religious conflict' in the Maluku islands since January 1999. According to newspaper and other sources, it is said that 3,000 to 4,000 people have been killed, even more have been injured and many people have lost their homes and become displaced persons. It is also reported that the situation continues to deteriorate in spite of the state of civil emergency that has been imposed on the Maluku islands since 27 June 2000.

We cannot help but judge that the escalation and spreading of violence against humanity, in spite of the civil emergency implementation, is a direct result of the coming of Jihad troops

into Maluku with the support of the TNI/POLRI indiscipline. Hatred breeds hatred, and retaliation breeds retaliation. The communities in Maluku, Christian as well as Muslim, have been the victims of a conflict among political groups who manipulate and abuse religious sentiments.

On the occasion of the General Assembly of the Christian Conference of Asia (CCA), which was held in Tomohon, Minahasa, 1–6 June 2000, we were moved, as participants, by your speech and appeal for 'reconciliation and peace' when you referred to the 'religious conflict' in the Maluku islands.

We request the following in hope and with prayers that you will bring true reconciliation and peace to the people in the Maluku islands. We would appreciate your consideration and appropriate actions on the following urgent requests:

- That all forms of violence be stopped immediately, that the actors, such as the jihad troops, be arrested and expelled from the areas of conflict (Maluku and North

Maluku) and that external rioters be prevented from entering Maluku.

- That the Government (of Indonesia) take concrete steps to discipline members of TNI/POLRI who take sides with the conflicting parties.
- That humanitarian assistance be given to all members of the communities in Maluku, who are suffering so deeply—to those injured and still hanging on to their places of residence as well as to the displaced who have been forced to flee their homes and villages and run into the mountains and forests or to other islands.
- That the Government of Indonesia watch and monitor the implementation of the state of civil emergency in Maluku to prevent human rights violations and any further annihilation of human beings in Maluku.

*National Christian Council in Japan
(NCCJ)*

Ms Suzuki Reiko, Moderator

Rev. Otsu Kenichi, General Secretary

Outrage in the Philippines

THE NATIONAL COUNCIL OF CHURCHES IN THE PHILIPPINES (NCCP), a conciliar body of eleven member churches and ten associate member service-oriented organisations, denounces with extreme infirmation the violent dispersal last

Monday of thousands of protesters as President Joseph Estrada delivered his third State of the Nation Address (SONA) before the joint session of the 11th Congress. The waves of violent dispersal showed phalanxes of trun-

cheon-wielding anti-riot policemen driving away groups of flag- and streamer-bearing protesters peacefully occupying the outermost lane of the avenue leading to the Batasan. While still under negotiation, the ground

commander rallied his men to disperse the crowd. Protesters scampered away for safety as police in full riot gear gave chase. Policemen started beating the protesters, even those who were on the ground and who were not fighting back. Television footage showed a cornered protester who was repeatedly hit on the head with truncheons as police dragged him a way bloodied.

We take issue with the pronouncements of the military and media that the church people at the mobilisation were impostors. They were sisters, priests, pastors, seminarians and lay leaders who were impelled by their Christian faith to express their pastoral care for the marginalised sectors

of the society. We, in the NCCP, are saddened by such acts of violence. In a democratic society, as government leaders thus claim, citizens have the right to assemble and call for a redress of grievances. We find it difficult to understand why the powers and principalities in this country have drawn the mantle of violence to quell legitimate expression of the people's right to call their government officials to task. We condemn the use of state violence at the protesters who were exercising their constitutional right to peacefully assemble in order to show, what for them, was the real state of the nation. The PNP's overreaction to the situation and the policemen's aggressive behaviour must be investigated by

the Commission on Human Rights. They who are supposed to guard the safety and security of the citizens must be held responsible for the injuries sustained by the victims.

We enjoin our NCCP constituency not to let their guard down. We call on them to pray unceasingly for the sorry state of our nation. But let our supplications be accompanied with vigilant actions that will ensure peace and justice in our land. As we have opportunity, let us challenge our government officials to listen to the cry of the poor and the oppressed whom Jesus came for.

*Sharon Rose Joy Ruiz-Duremdes
General Secretary, NCCP*

The Nagpur Statement of the Churches in India

THE NATIONAL COUNCIL OF CHURCHES IN INDIA AND THE CATHOLIC BISHOPS' CONFERENCE OF INDIA jointly convened a Church Leader's Meeting on the 11 July 2000 at the NCCI Campus, Nagpur. Forty-eight delegates representing the twenty-nine member churches of the NCCI and the Catholic Bishops' Conference of India participated in the meeting. It was called to discuss the following issues:

- To take stock of the present situation of atrocities against Christians and other minorities in order to forge a united strategy for action as response.
- To clearly state the stand of the churches in India vis-à-vis the fundamentalist outfits of the country.
- To discuss the alleged dialogue with Bajrang Dal and the Vishwa Hindu

Parishad which was announced even without consulting the CBCI and the NCCI to have taken place today, 11 July 2000.

- To work out strategies to put forward the official standpoint of the churches in India, including the CBCI and NCCI member churches.
- To rededicate and recommit the churches to struggle for the life issues for the poor, the marginalised and the excluded and to serve humanity.

The Nagpur Statement of the Churches in India

We, the Leaders of the Indian churches, at a meeting at Nagpur on 11 July 2000 jointly convened by the National Council of Churches in India and the Catholic Bishops Conference

of India at the NCCI Campus, have taken a serious and a close look at the continued atrocities against the churches, dalits and other minorities. Having analysed the facts and having discerned serious threats to the democratic, secular fabric of our nation, we make the following statement, hereinafter referred to as the Nagpur Statement of the Churches in India.

We re-affirm the fact of history that we are a religion which is 1,950 years old in India. In these years we have not only respected other faiths in our country but have also adhered to the democratic principles of mutual respect and coexistence with them. The churches in India have always upheld and abided by the principles of dialogue with people of other faiths in this land, which has served as the

cradle of ancient civilisations and major religions of the world.

We re-affirm that we have always identified ourselves with the poorest of the poor in our country and have served the nation in the fields of education, health, poverty alleviation programs, emergency relief, gender and social justice programs for the dalits and tribals, and have also contributed to the development of literature and grammar of several Indian languages. Our actions speak louder than words. We have furthermore worked selflessly towards the eradication of child labour and promoted ecological consciousness and other emancipatory programs. In all this we have contributed to the task of nation building. In spite of the fact that we are a meagre 2.5 per cent of the entire population we have contributed much through our service.

We re-affirm that our numerical strength has remained below 2.5 per cent of the entire population, which disproves the malicious theories of forced or coercive conversion raised against us. What we have achieved through the programs of service and proclamation is the emancipation and the empowerment of the socially oppressed, the marginalised and the excluded in society, and their liberation from an evil caste system which discriminates against dalits and tribals. The task of the churches has always been to be obedient to Christ's calling to empower and build communities based on the values of love, justice and peace, which are the fundamental pillars of the Christian faith. We affirm that our service to humanity is in obedience to Christ's calling to affirm life in all its fullness to all people.

We discern that violence against the minorities and the poor is the handiwork of a fundamentalist ideology which is based on intolerance, cultural exclusivism and domination. The atrocities against Christians and other minorities and the call for debates on conversions have marked the ascendancy of the fundamentalist forces. There has been a serious design to communalise the political processes. We also see the unhealthy nexus between political parties and right-wing formations which has resulted in the empowerment of the fundamentalists, as well as the increase in intimidation, organised violence and hate campaigns against the minorities. The recent utterances by several fundamentalist religious leaders have heralded a new form of violence against Christians and minorities. We also discern with alarm the increased intimidation of the minorities through the use of bombs, giving the criminals a degree of invisibility and legitimacy thus widening the scope and range of attack.

We discern that the state has responded very feebly to the demands of the minorities for justice, protection and security. The past thirty months have witnessed several hundred criminal cases ranging from rape, loot, arson, bombing, murder, molestation and exhumation of graves to the desecration of places of worship. We are appalled at the way the cases have been handled and we are deeply disappointed to note that not even one single case has been solved, or the culprits brought to book. This is a serious contradiction to the statements made by several government officers and officials describing the

acts as merely problems of law and order.

We discern that the present environment is not conducive to serious dialogue with fundamentalist groups. We appreciate and acknowledge the solidarity shown by the majority of the Hindu community and other minority communities who have extended their support, solidarity and understanding. The hate literature produced by the fundamentalist forces points to their intentions and methods. Their rhetoric of cultural nationalism through the process of intimidation exposes their agenda.

We demand that:

- the government undertake measures to instil confidence in the minds of the minorities in handling the situation arising out of the continued attacks,
- the government take immediate measures to stop the violence against Christians, minorities and other weaker sections and that the criminal acts over the past many months, including the recent bomb blasts in the churches, should be investigated immediately,
- the government ban organisations with overt communal leanings, especially those involved in violence,
- the government immediately bring the hate campaigners to book by initiating legal proceedings,
- the government take stern steps to bring the culprits to justice, regardless of their political or other affiliations,
- the government desist from utterances regarding the issues of conversion as it is within the constitutional and human rights/religious liberty framework.

We re-dedicate ourselves:

- to observe the dawn of the new millennium as the Year of the Lord and proclaim the jubilee to the captives in all kinds of bondage,
- to continue to serve the poor and the marginalised with greater commitment and to place more of our resources at the service of the poor,
- to continue to work for the eman-

ipation and empowerment of the dalits, tribals and adivasis,

- to continue to be involved in service and proclamation, recognising and upholding the values of free choice for all individuals and to desist from any form of forced and coercive conversion,
- to continue dialogue with representatives of other faiths who re-

spect and value the rights of all human beings,

- to act unitedly to affirm and safeguard our unity and ecumenical commitment.

We call upon all secular and democratic forces to unite in the common struggle against forces of fundamentalism and subjugation.

Endorsed by forty-four participants.

Statement of the National Christian Council of Sri Lanka on the Constitution-making Process

THE NATIONAL CHRISTIAN COUNCIL [of Sri Lanka] views the recent setback in the process of constitutional reform with mixed feelings.

While it recognises that the proposed new constitution [of Sri Lanka] is better than the present constitution, it has some reservations about the process by which it was to be adopted.

The government's decision to postpone the vote in parliament on the proposed new constitution must be viewed as an opportunity. While it is vital that the consensus reached by the two main political groupings in the country should not be diluted any further, the space provided by the postponement must be used to make improvements to the draft.

While the proposed new constitution contains several improvements, there are significant deficiencies as well which need to be addressed.

Furthermore, since there was a lack of transparency in the constitution-making process and insufficient opportunity and time for public discussion on the draft, the additional

time provided by the delay can be viewed in a positive light.

The National Christian Council has consistently advocated a political solution to the ethnic conflict. The proposed new constitution enhanced the devolution of power, recognised that Sri Lanka was a multi-ethnic country, strengthened the chapter on fundamental rights and created a better system of checks and balances to promote good governance and democracy. These positive features must be retained and, where necessary, further improved.

The acceptance of the principle of the supremacy of the constitution, the introduction of comprehensive judicial review of legislation, improving the provisions dealing with the independence of the judiciary, the incorporation of provisions to include regional representation at the centre and a review of the transitional provisions which virtually extend the term of office of the present president until 2005, are some areas which need to be reviewed.

It is vital that the dialogue between the People's Alliance, the United National Party, Tamil political parties and other leaders of our community continues.

Sri Lanka badly needs a new constitution which can promote peace, justice and democracy and ensure unity and stability in the country.

Rev. Roy Rebeira, Chairperson of NCC and President of the Dutch Reformed Church

Rt Rev. Kenneth Fernando, Bishop of Colombo

Rt Rev. Andrew Kumarage, Bishop of Kurunegala

Rev. Duleep Fernando, President of the Methodist Church

Rt Rev. S. Jebanesan, Bishop of the Church of South India in the Jaffna Diocese

Rev. Dr W.G. Wickramasinghe, President of the Sri Lanka Baptist Sangamaya

Colonel Keith Wylie, Territorial Commander, Salvation Army

Rev. George Stephen, Moderator of the Presbytery of Lanka

North and South Korea: 2000 Common Prayer for Peaceful Reunification

The National Council of Churches in Korea (NCCCK) and the Korean Christians Federation (KCF) have jointly agreed on this prayer, which was read during Sunday worship on 13 August 2000

God of history,
You have suffered and lamented with us in the pain of our people's division.
As we look back over the fifty-five long years of tragic separation,
We confess that we have not carried the cross of Jesus,
The cross of our people's salvation.
Hear our prayer O God.

O God who silently took up the cross for the salvation of all the world!
Let us not evade the heavy burden of our nation's history.
O God who brought Jacob and Esau together again even after they lived estranged for so long
Through their own rivalry, deception, hatred and indifference!
O God who allowed Joseph to once again meet his brothers, who, through envy and hatred, had sold him over to the Egyptians!
How long will we glare in hatred and aim our weapons of destruction at our own brothers and sisters?
May we no longer each insist on our own right!
May we no longer prattle the words of other nations!
Have mercy on us
And let our people walk the way of forgiveness and reconciliation.

God who unites the divided!
Pour your spirit of reconciliation into our hearts.
Help us to give our every effort to overcome division and become one.
Make us the instruments of our own reunification
And let us tear down all material and spiritual walls that divide us
And replenish the earth destroyed by explosives and pollution.

And in this work, O God,
Let the churches of the South and North/North and South lead the way.
Loving God who remembers the 'han'—the sorrow and grief—of orphans
And widows,
And who breathes new life into the exhausted wanderers!
We pray for our nation.
Let not those with plenty withhold from those with little,
Let not those in high places oppress the lowly,
Let not the strong create fear for the weak,
Let not the learned despise those who have had no chance to learn.
Let us strive to live justly rather than to seek wealth,
Let us follow Jesus who bore the cross, and walk the way of serving others.

O God who does not forget even so small an act as giving a cup of water to a nameless one,
Fill our people with the spirit of loving others as we love ourselves.
Let our divided kin meet and help one another unconditionally
And work to achieve coexistence, coprosperity and our common welfare under the banner of reunification.
Help us to change old thinking that has taken root in our society and to cast off our long slavery to ideology.
In this new millennium, this new era,
Let the sisters and brothers of South and North/North and South
Embrace and share joy with one another,
And open wide the new day of peace and reunification.

We pray in the name of Jesus Christ
Who nurtures the seed of our whole nation's salvation,
peace and reunification.

Korean South–North Joint Declaration

Following is the text of the landmark Joint Declaration signed by South Korean President Kim Dae-jung and North Korean leader Kim Jong-il in the North Korean capital Pyongyang on 15 June 2000

IN ACCORDANCE with the noble will of the entire people who yearn for the peaceful reunification of the nation, President Kim Dae-jung of the Republic of Korea and National Defence Commission Chairman Kim Jong-il of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea held a historic meeting and summit talks in Pyongyang from 13 to 15 June 2000. The leaders of the South and the North, recognising that the meeting and the summit talks were of great significance in promoting mutual understanding, developing South–North relations and realising peaceful reunification, declared as follows:

- The South and the North have agreed to resolve the question of reunification independently and through the joint efforts of the Korean people, who are the masters of the country.
- For the achievement of reunification, we have agreed that there is a common element in the South's concept of a confederation and the North's formula for a loose form of federation. The South and the North agreed to promote reunification in that direction.
- The South and the North have agreed to promptly resolve humanitarian issues such as exchange visits

by separated family members and relatives on the occasion of the 15 August National Liberation Day and the question of unswerving Communists serving prison sentences in the South.

- The South and the North have agreed to consolidate mutual trust by promoting balanced development of the national economy through economic cooperation and by stimulating cooperation and exchanges in civic, cultural, sports, health, environmental and all other fields.
- The South and the North have agreed to hold a dialogue between relevant authorities in the near future to implement the above agreements expeditiously. President Kim Dae-jung cordially invited National Defence Commission Chairman Kim Jong-il to visit Seoul, and Chairman Kim Jong-il will visit Seoul at an appropriate time.

*Kim Dae-jung, President, Republic of Korea
Kim Jong-il, Chairman, National Defence Commission, Democratic People's Republic of Korea
15 June 2000*

Memorable Visit to North Korea

THE FIRST VISIT to the Democratic People's Republic of [North] Korea by church leaders of the Hong Kong Christian Council took place in July this year. The delegates were Rev Li Ping-kwong, Chairman of the HKCC; Rev. Eric So, General Secretary, Rev. Bob C.C. Lo, Dean of the Tsung Tsin Mission of Hong Kong, and Lt Col. Ian Southwell, Officer Commanding, The Salvation Army, Hong Kong. We had

been invited by the Korea Christian Federation (KCF)—the body that oversees the work of the Christian church in North Korea.

We were warmly welcomed by the president of the KCF, Rev. Kang Yong-sop. He has held this position for fifteen years. Rev. Kang is also a member of the standing committee of the People's Assembly. Rev. Kang told us that there were two large churches in

Pyongyang, with some 500 house churches (family churches). He mentioned that there were ten people working through theological training and that there were now some 10,000 Christians in North Korea. Elders and deacons looked after the house churches as there are very few ordained ministers. At a welcome dinner he commented very positively on the contributions of Christians from

other countries, including some from South Korea and the USA. Rev. Kang said the tour would give the delegation an opportunity to understand the political and cultural environment in which the Christian church operated in North Korea.

The visit certainly fulfilled its purpose, even though most of the excursions were in and around the capital city.

We were delighted to see good facilities at a number of children's centres. Young children often live at these centres from Monday through to Friday. The deportment and musical skills of these children had to be seen to be believed. In almost every instance, the complex music was played from memory by children as young as four or five years of age. They were supremely confident in front of an audience and had been exceedingly well drilled. Subsequently, the group became conscious that much of the education at these centres was linked to the re-telling of the story of the nation from the birth of the great leader Kim Il-sung in 1912. All good things in the centres—and the very idea of the centres themselves—were attributed to the great leader. The stories of his birth, his exploits in freeing North Korea from the Japanese by 1945, and the birth of his son, General Kim Jong-il—now the leader of the nation—were re-accounted again and again. The songs about the great leader were as common as the songs about Jesus Christ in Christian daycare centres in other countries. The influence on the young children in understanding this section of the history and philosophy of the nation could not be overestimated.

Medical centres also featured in our visits. We were impressed with the standard of care at the Pyongyang Maternity Hospital. We learned that triplets and quadruplets were considered so valuable that national leadership had decreed that multiple-birth children should be brought in to the hospital from outlying areas in the North Korea.

The Pyongyang Medical Centre similarly had some good equipment, including a very expensive CAT scan machine. Other good equipment was available but seemed not to be connected to electrical power.

The visit to the Pyongyang city orphanage, however, was something of a contrast. The standards of cleanliness and clothing were not as high and the person in charge indicated her hope that the Hong Kong Christian Council would be able to provide some more powdered milk for the children. The group discovered that a number of sets of triplets and quadruplets from the Maternity Hospital found their way to the orphanage because their parents found difficulty in coping with them. Also there were children whose parents had passed away due to diseases such as tuberculosis or from the results of accidents. Twenty per cent of the children in the orphanage had no living parents.

The group was pleased to be able to visit the Bongsu noodle factory sponsored by KCF. About eight workers make noodles to assist the feeding program within the community around Bongsu. We were told that food production was carefully monitored. If Bongsu noodle factory was able to produce food for some areas then the ration from the state would be reduced.

In retrospect, we wondered if this would also affect the orphanages to which powdered milk is sent from the Hong Kong Christian Council.

The stonework produced by the country is excellent. Monuments and towers are well-constructed. Sadly, stone and steel do not feed hungry people who have suffered from poor harvests over the last three or four years. There also seemed to be little activity in factories, or at the cargo delivery areas of the seaport of Pyongyang, or the airport. Consumer goods were in short supply—and expensive. Hard currency was eagerly sought.

In what could have turned out to be a depressing visit, there were some encouraging highlights. We visited the Mangyondae School Children's Palace. After-school activities here are provided in music, art, TV production, electronics and gymnastics. Absolutely brilliant. The standard of the performance by young people under 15 years of age in a one-hour festival following our visit to the classrooms was equivalent to that of adult professionals. Similarly, the circus run by the People's Army was a great display of gymnastics, clowns and animal acts. They were highly disciplined and organised. A visit to Myohyansan Mountain provided an opportunity to see some magnificent scenery at the third most famous mountain in North Korea. While the purpose of the visit was probably to introduce us to the International Friendship Exhibition displaying the more than 200,000 gifts given to the great leader and his successor, we were able to take in the scenery. At least there were plenty of trees. The nearby Ryongmun cavern provided opportunities to see some magnificent

stalactites and stalagmites during a two-kilometre walk underground. Realising that much of the tour was about 'educating' us, the group asked if we could visit some of the house churches on Sunday and also the theological school during the week. We were told that the house churches were not on the schedule approved by the Executive Committee of KFC for our visit. To our surprise, we also discovered that the theological school had actually 'disappeared' about two years ago because of lack of finance.

We were pleased to learn, however, that a group of visitors from the South Korean Churches was promising to raise money to help re-establish the theological school.

If this is so, it would be a marvelous contribution. So will continued visits by church and community development groups.

The highlight for the group was the visit to Bongsu and Chilgol churches on Sunday. Probably 150 people attended the morning service at Bongsu. This included nationals and some visitors from overseas. Most of the people in church were between 30 and 60 years of age. There were no young peo-

ple. Rev Li Ping-kwong brought greetings and presented the plaque to the church. The choir led the singing and presented some solo items. We were provided with English/Korean hymn books printed in South Korea. Another book was used by the rest of the congregation. The Bible message was faithfully presented. Prayer was offered for the re-unification of the country in terms of the recent Joint Declaration following the leaders' summit meeting between Kim Jong-il and Kim Dae-jung of South Korea.

Following the benediction, we were hurried off to the Chilgol church where the choir members and the pastor were waiting to greet us. Our delegation was not surprised to learn that the great leader had chosen the site of the Chilgol church and the government provided half its funding. Unlike the Bongsu church, we were able to ask the pastor a number of questions. His answers (via translation) were disturbing. 'No, it is not possible for us to teach children the Christian message directly.' 'There is no particular time for weekday Bible studies at the church.' 'No, the church does not undertake any specific community work.

All Christians are in different occupations and make their contribution there.' 'There are no baptism ceremonies held in the church.' 'Eucharist only takes place about four times a year.' 'You have to understand the circumstances in which we work within the Juche principle.'

The Chilgol choir presented a number of items including 'How Great Thou Art'. Then our group was asked to sing. We chose 'What a Friend We Have in Jesus' and 'Count Your Blessings'. Members of the choir came to join us and we sang these two hymns. It was moving. In music and song we mutually re-affirmed our friendship with Jesus and that everything could be taken to him in prayer.

My eyes were misty with tears and there was a lump in my throat as we sang the words: 'So, amid the conflict whether great or small,/Do not be disheartened, God is over all;/Count your many blessings, angels will attend./ Help and comfort give you to your journey's end.'

And I made my own prayer that those words would be true for my fellow believers in North Korea.

Ian Southwell

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Deliver My People

Igreja Protestante iha Timor Lorosa'e holds its third meeting

The Protestant Church in East Timor held its third meeting on 5–9 July 2000 under the theme, 'I have come down to deliver my people' (Exodus 3:8a), and a subtheme: 'With the spirit of the third meeting we together build the a just and democratic Timor Lorosa'e'. The name of the church, established in 1988 as Gereja Kristen Timor Timur (Christian Church in East Timor), was officially changed at this meeting to Igreja Protestante iha Timor Lorosa'e (IPTL, Protestant Church in Timor Lorosa'e).

The theme of the meeting reflected the understanding of the church that the freedom the country has gained is the response of God to the cry, prayer and hope of the people in Timor Lorosa'e. This is to remind the new nation of Timor Lorosa'e that the freedom they attained was not merely due to the effort of the people of Timor

Lorosa'e, but is the concrete act of God amidst the journey and the struggle of the people.

The church's main issue at this moment is 'reconstruction', which includes physical reconstruction (to rebuild the country that has been destroyed), relational reconstruction (to rebuild a new relationship among the people of Timor Lorosa'e) and cultural reconstruction (to rediscover the culture which had disappeared, been destroyed and ruined during the 450 years of Portuguese occupation and twenty-four years under Indonesian invasion). The work of reconstruction also includes a reconstruction of the new understanding about the role of the church in the new situation and the reconstruction of the economy of congregations and society.

The main challenges confronting the people of Timor Lorosa'e are in the

fields of the economy, education and health. Food distributions have been stopped, although people still need such a distribution at least for the coming few months due to the heavy destruction of the agrarian infrastructure and the primary attention of people in building huts to live in. Many buffalos, which are very important in the process of cultivating rice fields, were killed. The security situation has improved, but recently some militias tried to enter Timor Lorosa'e and killed a few members of the peace keeping force.

The meeting also underlined the importance of human resource development for future leadership. In addition to the delegates of the congregations, the meeting was also attended by guests from neighbouring churches, such as the Evangelical Christian Church in Timor (GMIT), the Uniting Church in Australia, NCC Australia and representatives from the Catholic Church Dilli diocese.

The meeting elected a new leadership: Rev. Francisco M. de Vasconcelos (Moderator), Rev. Luis A. Pinto (Vice Moderator), Rev. Daniel Marcal (Secretary), Guliherme dos Reis Fernandez (Vice Secretary), Rev. Moises da Silva (Treasurer), Sofyan (Vice Treasurer) and members Rev. Franzelino de Jesus, G.I. Luis Mendonca, Horacio Mendes (youth representative) and Zita Amaral (women's representative).

Francisco M. de Vasconcelos



Delegates of Igreja Protestante iha Timor Lorosa'e at the CCA General Assembly

Uniting Church in Australia Assembly

The Uniting Church in Australia held its Assembly in Adelaide, South Australia, in July. The Assembly meets every three years and is the main policy setting body for Australia's third largest church. Topics on the agenda included reconciliation (between the original inhabitants of Australia and those who have settled there in the last two centuries), the mandatory sentencing laws of some Australian states, issues of sexuality in the church, and ecumenism (a declaration of understanding with the Lutheran Church was passed and much work has been done together with the Catholic church).

'Assembly 2000 will be remem-

bered as a mission assembly,' said the new UCA President, James Haire. During the assembly the Uniting Church entered into partnership agreements with four churches—the Cook Islands Christian Church and three Indonesian churches, in Minahasa in North Sulawesi, and with the two Protestant churches of the Maluku, Ambon and Halmahera.

Agustinus Aesh, Chairman of the Gereja Masehi Injili Halmahera (the Protestant Church of Halmahera), noted that his church had ordained Prof. Haire. James Haire said that in the last eighty years, the Protestant Church in Halmahera had come to represent 60 per cent of the population.

Now it was in danger of being completely wiped out. He described the Malukus as a 'paradise lost'. Australians had a special responsibility in this crisis, as Ambonese people had helped Australian soldiers in World War II.

On the Saturday afternoon after the assembly James Haire preached at a service in the Port Adelaide Mission where the Ambonese community lit candles in memory of those who had died. 'In some cases it will be the only memorial service these people will have as in many cases their bodies have not been recovered,' said Prof. Haire. 'And in this tragic situation it is almost impossible to hold a memorial service in Ambon itself.'

James Haire New UCA President

Prof. James Haire has been installed as the national president of the Uniting Church in Australia. Professor Haire is well known in Asia. He was a UCA delegate at the recent CCA General Assembly and knows Indonesia well.

During his induction he spoke on the regional crisis engulfing many Asian and Pacific nations and Australia's response.

He said, 'At this point in time each faces the greatest crisis in their histories as independent nations. Particularly in relation to the Moluccas, it is absolutely the duty of the Australian Government to do even more now, in terms of international advocacy, humanitarian aid and the reception of refugees.'



Professor Haire also issued a strong call on Australian churches to 'get on' with church unity: 'I challenge us tonight to engage in the search for Christian unity, not just with long-established denominations, but with all groupings, in as determined a way as we can. Do we take Christian unity seriously? Will we give our all for its achievement?'

'I challenge every Australian church, and indeed every overseas church: Ask no longer, "Is it safe to move into serious unity negotiations?" Only ask: "Is it safe to stand before the Lord separated from my sister or brother?" Ask no longer: "Which church do I belong to?" Only ask, "Whose church do I belong to?"'

James Haire was born and educated in Ireland. He worked in Indonesia for thirteen years (the Maluku—Ambon) and has written the standard text on the religion and culture of the region. In Australia he has been Professor of New Testament theology at Griffith University Theological College. Professor Haire's perspective on Indonesian concerns is often sought by international radio and television.

The Idolatry of Capital and the New Religion of Consumerism

Christians from many denominations made an appeal for alternatives to 'globalised capitalism', alternatives to strengthen democratic participation and ensure survival of the poor and marginalised.

These appeals were made at a week-long colloquium, 'Churches and Social Movements Facing Globalisation', which ended on 16 June at the Evangelical Academy in Hofgeismar, Germany, attended by over 150 theologians, pastors, social activists, economists and environmentalists from forty countries.

The participants urged churches to support a 'global coalition for economic justice and faith' and to resist the 'fundamentalist religious adherence to neo-liberalism'.

'The ideology of the free market captures and dominates all sectors of societies and all dimensions of people's lives, even our bodies and deepest desires,' said the concluding declaration. 'The time has come for a radical change in the dominant economic system. The time has come for a process of committed recognition, education and confession regarding economic injustice and ecological destruction.'

According to the declaration, participants were aware of the 'contradictions, failures and temptations' through which churches and religious communities had themselves become 'entangled with the economic system'.

However, it added that the 'theology of grace' had to be affirmed against a 'theology of prosperity'. Christians, Muslims, Jews, Hindus and Buddhists all held the same principles of 'life-centredness, respect for nature, option for the poor and justice through sharing and prophetic work'.

'We are parts of creation, not gods. Therefore, we need democratic political institutions and movements working for the social responsibility of private property, for social justice and the preservation of nature,' the declaration states.

'We wish to continue to discern common reflection and action on our various strategic options: prophetic critique and legal taming of power and wealth, resistance to unjust structures and living out alternatives.'

Participants at the meeting, who formed ten sub-groups to debate poverty and exclusion, work and employment and other 'strategic issues', heard testimonies from representatives of non-Christians faiths, as well as from alternative local economy networks, women's associations and minorities.

The German Protestant who organised the colloquium, Ulrich Duchrow, said the aim had been to 'establish communication' between groups working on issues of faith and economics since the 1998 Harare assembly of the World Council of Churches, and to establish greater 'commitment,

purpose and clarity' between dispersed ecumenical organisations.

However, he added that the colloquium was only one 'step in the process', and would be followed up by regional ecumenical networks in Africa, Asia and Latin America.

In their declaration, participants defined globalisation as 'a variety of phenomena, positive and negative', which had accelerated the 'integration of financial markets'.

They added that globalisation had made financial capital the 'leading actor of the global economic process'.

'In a world transformed into a global casino, life has become unpredictable. Social relations between individuals, social classes and groups, and between nations are regulated by financial interests, affecting family, religious and cultural values,' the declaration continues.

'Willingly or unwillingly, consciously or unconsciously, we all participate in the historical process which has led into this system which excludes any mechanism of supervision or control.'

The document said that about US\$1,650 billion of 'virtual money' was moved around the world each day, often undermining national economies. It added that globalisation was 'ruthlessly pushing the world into a uni-polar, barrierless global society', in which financial capital and international debt were 'devastating nations'

and 'becoming destructive of the material basis for human life'.

The declaration stated that transnational corporations were 'unleashing major ecological disasters' and causing 'social upheavals', while the World Bank, International Monetary Fund and other institutions had placed Third World countries in the 'death grip of debt', and imposed policies which fuelled 'trauma, suffering and devastation'.

'We resist the assumption that the world economic system should be primarily oriented toward the accumulation of wealth for the benefit of a small minority, rather than toward the satisfaction of basic needs of all human

beings and the nurturing of God's creation,' the document continued. 'We resist the idolatry of capital and the new religion of consumerism, which defines the purpose of life in terms of material possessions.'

The concluding declaration said colloquium participants would work politically to 'strengthen grassroots democratic participation' to 'regulate the economy', as well as making 'critical assessments' of how religious movements had become 'part of the problem of economic globalisation'.

Colloquium participants recommended that 5 per cent of church budgets be allocated to 'life-enhancing economic development', and the

disinvestment of church money from commercial banks and corporations engaging in 'speculation and tax evasion'. Steps should also be taken, the colloquium document states, to make financial capital 'democratically, socially and ecologically accountable' through 'synodical bottom-up decision-making processes'.

The colloquium was sponsored by the World Council of Churches, World Alliance of Reformed Churches and Pax Christi International and received support from twenty other ecumenical organisations. It was partly funded by the European Union, under its now discontinued 'Soul for Europe' program. *Jonathan Luxmoore (ENI)*

Ecumenical Advocacy Alliance

A new organisation, the Ecumenical Advocacy Alliance, will be established in late 2000 to bring together a wide range of churches and church-related organisations to work together in advocacy on global issues. This new alliance seeks to give the churches a more effective voice in shaping the political and economic order that affects the lives of all human beings on this planet. At its founding meeting in December 2000, the Ecumenical Advocacy Alliance will agree on two issues for action over the next three years. By focusing our collective efforts on a limited number of priority issues, we seek to increase the impact of our advocacy efforts. Selecting which issues to focus on is expected to be a difficult task.

Criteria for Issues

Issues selected should:

- be of **global concern**, affecting people all over the world,
- require advocacy on a **global level** (not limited to country- or regional-specific advocacy),
- be ones where the ecumenical movement is able to bring a specific **ethical and theological perspective** to the international policy debate,
- be one where there is both **broad expertise** and **expressed interest** within the ecumenical family,
- be suitable to a '**campaign-style**' of advocacy,
- be able to be **clearly defined** and **communicated**, and
- be amenable to the development of a careful **long-term strategy**, in-

cluding identification of the times and places where pressure can be effective.

Input is sought from a full range of churches and church-related ecumenical organisations and networks:

- What issues should the Alliance focus on during its first three years?
- Why? In particular, why is this particular issue one that churches and the ecumenical family—as compared with secular NGOs—should address?
- If your church or organisation has set priorities for advocacy in the coming period, what are these priority issues?

For more information contact Maria Vila at WCC, PO Box 2100, 1211 Geneva 2, Switzerland. Fax: (+41 22) 7102419, email: mvs@wcc-coe.org.

CCA Personnel Moving Elsewhere

Mathews George Chunakara

DR MATHEWS GEORGE CHUNAKARA, Executive Secretary for Indochina and International Affairs, left CCA in July 2000, after the Tomohon Assembly, to take up his new responsibility as Executive Secretary for Regional Relations in Asia of the World Council of Churches. Mathews served on the editorial board of *CCA News*.

Emmanuel Ilagan

MR EMMANUEL ILAGAN, consultant for the joint program of CCA and the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), specifically for rural youth training, left CCA in August 2000 to undertake a further study at the Lutheran Theological Seminary in San Francisco.

Marina True

MS MARINA TRUE, a Master of Divinity student from San Francisco Theological Seminary, spent a year at CCA as a communications intern. Based at the CCA Centre in Hong Kong from July 1999 to June 2000, Marina, during her internship, contributed to a number of publications, including *CCA News*.

WCC and CCA Meet Malaysian PM

Representatives from the World Council of Churches, Christian Conference of Asia and Christian Federation of Malaysia met with

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad to talk about the economic future of South-East Asia and inter-religious relations.

The WCC General Secretary Rev Dr Konrad Raiser said the meeting also touched on what could be done to strengthen and foster harmonious ties using Malaysia as an example. 'We were impressed by his thoughtful and considerate reflections. I was more interested in listening to him,' he said. Rev Raiser added that there was no special agenda behind the meeting, held at the PM's Department, other than being a friendly discussion.

Christian Conference of Asia General Secretary Feliciano V. Cariño said Dr Mahathir had gained respect in Asian circles for the steps he had implemented to combat the economic crisis. '[Malaysia] is also one part of the South-East Asia region where religious tolerance exists which is supported by government policy,' he said.

New Bishop of Bali Church

The recent synod meeting of the Protestant Christian Church in Bali (GKPB), held 27–30 July 2000, elected anew bishop, Rev. Ketut Suyaga Ayub. Rev. Ayub served as the General Secretary of the church in 1976–1984 and 1992–2000.

Dr I. Wayan Mastra, the retiring bishop of the Bali Church, commented that Rev. Ayub is 'a very committed Christian and reliable person and has a long experience in leadership'. He further stated that he is positive Rev. Ayub 'will be able to lead the Bali

Church to reach its vision'. The consecration was held on 12 August in the historic Bali Church in Blimbingsari. All GKPB's pastors and about 2,000 people from all congregations in Bali attended the event. The same synod meeting appointed Dr Mastra to be one of the members of the Advisory Board of the Bali Church for the period 2000–2004. He was also appointed as a caretaker Director of the Hotel and Tourism Training Centre (PPLP Dhyana Pura), owned by the church.

World Convention of Churches of Christ

The fifteenth World Convention of Churches of Christ was held 2–6 August 2000 in Brisbane, Australia. Between two and three thousand people from congregations related to the Stone–Campbell family of churches from over thirty countries attended, including many from Asia. As the participants come from a variety of independent churches and denominations there were almost no business sessions. Instead conventioners were offered a smorgasbord of Bible studies, worship, seminars, speakers, tours and forums to choose from.

Highlights of the convention included a moving address from Ron O'Grady on child exploitation, hearing of the work of Saleem Massey among the brick makers in Pakistan, Thai dance and drama from a group from the Christian Communications Institute at Payap University and a concert with jazz trumpeter James Morrison. The final service featured a cappella choirs and communion.

New GMIM Leadership

The Gerija Masehi Injili Minahasa (Christian Evangelical Church in Minahasa), host of the CCA General Assembly, held its own Assembly in April 2000 and elected a new Executive Synod Committee for the period 2000–2005:

Moderator: Arnold F. Parengkuan

Vice Moderators

Faith and Order: Josef M. Saruan

Local Congregation Affairs: M.L.H.

Mosal

Personnel: Maria Politton-Assa

Mission and Ecumenical Relations: R.A.D. Siwu

Functional Ministry and Education: D.P. Togas

Resources and Fund Mobilisation: E. Sepang

General Secretary: Nico Gara

Associate General Secretary: A.W.

Tampemawa

Treasurer: H. Montong

Member in Charge of Women's

Ministry: L. Manengkey-Kawet

Member in Charge of Men's Ministry:

Boy Tangkawarow

Member in Charge of Senior Youth

Ministry: Hanny Pua

Member in Charge of Junior Youth

Ministry: Jimmy Mamahit

Member in Charge of Sunday School

Ministry: A.O.D. Pangaila

Members at Large: S. Merentek-

Abram, A. Kapahang-Kaunang,

D.K. Lolowang, Jootje M.L.

Umboh, J. Lombok, Winsulangi-

Salindeho



Carolyn Kitto

Carolyn Kitto to NCCA

The National Council of Churches in Australia has announced the appointment of a new associate general secretary, responsible for the council's Christian World Service work. Carolyn Kitto, currently mission

planning consultant with the New South Wales Synod of the Uniting Church, will take up the position in December.

Ms Kitto has a degree in science and a background in youth work, Christian education and resourcing the life and mission of local congregations. She is currently completing a Master of Ministry degree.

She succeeds Michael Brown, who has held the post since 1997.

COMING EVENTS

Workshop on Peace Building for Youth Leaders

Sri Lanka, 25 September – 1 October 2000

One of the expressed functions of CCA is 'the development of effective Christian responses to the challenges of the changing societies in Asia'. Hence, considering the present realities in Asia and concern

over violence and denial of basic human rights in religious and ethnic conflicts in South and South East Asia is appropriate and relevant to the mission of CCA. The major conflicts in South and South East Asia stem from diversity in religion and ethnicity, as well as the overall sociopolitical condition of each country.

'Overcoming Violence and Peace Building' has been a constant concern in the thrust of CCA Youth programs. This workshop on peace building will focus on religious and ethnic conflict

in South and South East Asia. CCA Youth aims to equip young people to take up this challenge and respond to the calling of building peace amidst continuing violence and injustice. We have chosen this theme not only just to understand the situation but also to call for interfaith action so that a culture of building peace can be started in the younger generation. Similar workshops with a relevant focus in peace building will be organised in other subregions in coming years. The workshop will gather around seven-

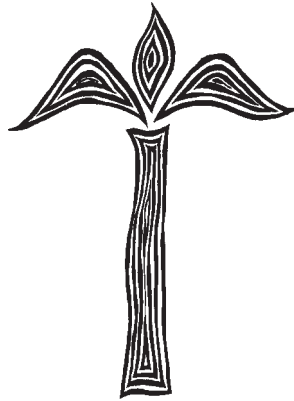
teen youth leaders who have been involved in peace issues from Indonesia, Malaysia, Pakistan, India, Bangladesh, Thailand and Sri Lanka. It attempts to critically examine the religious tension and violence in South and South East Asia, to explore the Biblical basics on interfaith dialogue and tolerance, to learn the skills of facilitating interfaith action among youth to build a culture of peace and to facilitate exchange among CCA youth networks. These youth leaders are expected to continue their organising roles, such as organising small groups for campaign and advocacy on peace issues, after returning to their home countries. The workshop is being organised in collaboration with the NCC Sri Lanka Youth Committee.

Asia Youth Week

16–22 October 2000

CCA Youth celebrates the Asia Youth Week every year on the third week of October. During this special week, 16–22 October in 2000, we encourage young people in Asia to come together to share and learn about the life experiences of their communities and countries, to reflect on and critically study the issues affecting peoples' lives in Asia and to seek for the nature and meaning of Christian mission in our context. Asia Youth Week is also a time for joy and celebration as we express our unity and solidarity with young people, as well as to make a renewed commitment to the vision that holds the promise of a transformed community.

So, this is an invitation to all young people in Asia to hold reflective and



celebratory events to mark Asia Youth Week. Seminars, workshops, drama, drawing, painting, music, poetry, song, dance, worship and prayer could be used to make such an event a memorable one. As it is an ecumenical event it should draw young people irrespective of faith or ideological commitment. With the success of the Asian Students and Youth Gathering 2000, we strongly encourage different student and youth groups to organise a common event together. It is our hope that Asia Youth Week will inspire and challenge us to be constantly alive to the vision and hopes, the love and passion of being young people in Asia.

This year the Biblical theme of Asia Youth Week is from John 10:10—'Time for Fullness of Life for All'. We invite youth from all over Asia to reflect on the importance of 'God's time' in our Christian faith, and the meaning as well as actualisation of 'Fullness of Life' for Asia—now! Resource materials and postcards produced for this event have been prepared jointly by a group of young people from five regional ecumenical student and youth organisations. We have sent the resource materials to our CCA constituencies in the hope that it will provoke discussions and activities at the local

level as the booklet contains many suggestions and tips for activities. Please use it and adapt it to your calendar and the needs of your activity.

Week of Prayer for Christian Unity 2001

The Week of Prayer for Christian Unity will be held next on 18–25 January 2001. The theme for 2001 is, 'I am the way, and the truth, and the life.' The material for next year's week of prayer was prepared by an international group appointed by the Commission on Faith and Order of the World Council of Churches and the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity [of the Roman Catholic Church] at a meeting held at the guest-house of the Evangelical [Lutheran] Church of the Augsburg Convention in Romania, in Vulcan, Romania, in October 1999.

Regional Workshop on Women and Racism

12–19 September 2000, Hsinchu College, Hsinchu City, Taiwan

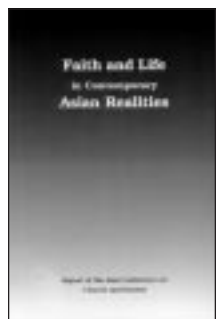
CCA Women's Concerns and the WCC Women under Racism Program are jointly sponsoring a regional workshop on Women and Racism in Asia. The local host is the Presbyterian Church of Taiwan.

This regional workshop aims generally to provide an ecumenical space of encounter for women from specific ethnic/minority/racially discriminated communities to come together for sharing, study, worship, networking and action planning.

New Publications

Faith and Life in Contemporary Asian Realities

(CCA, Hong Kong, 2000, 285 pp, US\$15)



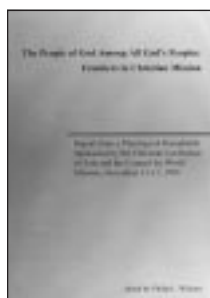
This publication contains the major papers presented at the Asia Conference on Church and Society held in Darwin, Australia, on 23–

30 September 1999. The theme, 'Faith and Life in Contemporary Asian Realities', was chosen to provide a broad framework for explorations into as wide a range of issues as possible in regard to the church's relationship with and witness in contemporary Asian societies. The range of issues discussed included: faith and economic life, religious plurality and the roles of religions in economic, social and political life, a new world of communications and its challenges to church and society, migration, ecology, the changing ideological climate of church and society as we move towards the twenty-first century.

The People of God among All God's Peoples: Frontiers in Christian Mission

(CCA, Hong Kong, 2000, 371 pp, US\$15)

This book has been published by CCA in collaboration with the Council for World Mission. It contains the report and the major papers presented at the Theological Roundtable sponsored by the two organisations held in Hong Kong on 11–17 November 1999. The primary purpose of the roundtable was to provide an occasion for initiating a



rigorous, sustained and substantial ecumenical discussion and consideration of the critical issues of mission and missiology in this new era. There were five broad areas of discussion: theological and biblical perspectives on mission, the challenges of other religious traditions for understanding Christian mission, mission as social engagement, the challenge of the new world of technology for Christian mission and the relationships among proclamation, church and unity.

Sound the Bamboo—CCA Hymnal 2000

(CCA, Taiwan Church Press, 2000, 358 pp, US\$15)



This new hymnal was launched at the 11th General Assembly in Tomohon in June 2000. It is the revised version of *Sound the Bamboo*—CCA Hymnal 1990. The new book contains 315 hymns in forty-one Asian languages. Eleven hymns from the 1990 edition were removed, and forty-six new ones, mostly from countries that were previously under-represented, were added. Some hymns have been rewritten, rephrased or re-composed, but apart from one exception, the original numbering system has been retained for familiarity and continuity's sake.

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Time for Fullness of Life for All: Biblical and Theological Reflections

(CCA, Hong Kong, 2000, 52pp US\$5)

This booklet contains six Bible biblical and theological reflections on the theme of the General Assembly of CCA in Tomohon, 1–6 June 2000.

Time for Fullness of Life for All—Assembly Worship Book

(CCA, Hong Kong, 2000, 50pp, US\$5)



This book contains six daily liturgies, including songs, based on the theme of the Assembly, 'Time for Fullness of Life for All', and were used during daily worship during the CCA General Assembly in Tomohon.

This book contains six daily liturgies, including songs, based on the theme of the Assembly, 'Time for Fullness of Life for All', and were used during daily worship during the CCA General Assembly in Tomohon.

Time for Fullness of Life for All—Asia Youth Week 2000

(CCA, Hong Kong, 2000, 47 pp)



Resource materials for Asia Youth Week 2000, normally celebrated on the third week of October. It contains various activities for the event, including ice-breaking, context building, theological and biblical reflection and responding in faith.

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GENERAL ASSEMBLY



Welcome to North Sulawesi



The choir



Travel



Discussion