



Christian Conference of Asia

cca news



Journeying Together



Journeying Together
for Peace



Journeying Together
with Our Neighbours



Journeying Together
for Gender Justice



Volume 38 • Number 1 • March 2003

Journeying Together

In the midst of all this, we affirm our journeying together, whether in joy or in sorrow, for the building up of a community of peace with justice, for fullness of life for all



(Chris I. Tamaela. Artwork used for the Asia Sunday 2003 booklet, originally used for the worship resources of the 9th CCA General Assembly in Manila in 1990)

The editorial team of *CCA News* has chosen 'Journeying Together' as the theme of our March issue. The theme affirms the ecumenical journey of the Christian Conference of Asia, with its member churches and councils throughout the region and its ecumenical partners in the region and throughout the world.

Part of that journey is now being prepared by a group working on the history project. The meeting in January of the History Project Committee has given many of us a sense of satisfaction as well as excitement at the prospect of our coming up with our own history of the ecumenical journey in Asia.

A visit to Myanmar in February was a time to express solidarity with the Burmese churches. We certainly hope for a budding of genuine goodwill in that country among the people and its leaders.

We realise that for many of us in Asia the journey is on turbulent waters as we continue to face the horrifying effects of globalisation, militarisation and terrorism. For some the turbulence is due to poverty and injustice, corruption and oppression.

In the midst of all this, we affirm our journeying together, whether in joy or in sorrow, for the building up of a community of peace with justice, for fullness of life for all.

This year, we have prepared a kit for our journey—the *Asia Sunday 2003* booklet, which carries the theme 'For We Are Neighbours'. We hope you will find the material useful as you come up with your own ways of affirming that we can only meaningfully journey together if we regard each other as a neighbour, worthy of care and attention.

We are now in the season of Lent, which itself reflects the journey of Christ through his passion and crucifixion. With the celebration of International Women's Day, we are also reminded of the call to journey with women everywhere in partnership and equality.

I wish you all a meaningful journey together. May God journey with us and give us the direction and the energy to continue on the journey in spite of all the difficulties that may arise.

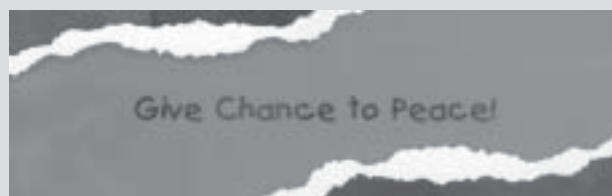
—*Abn Jae Woong*

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... for Peace

In the wake of threats and rumours of war, Asian people from all walks of life take part in various actions for peace

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CCA calls on churches to celebrate Asia Sunday 2003, with the theme 'For We Are Neighbours'

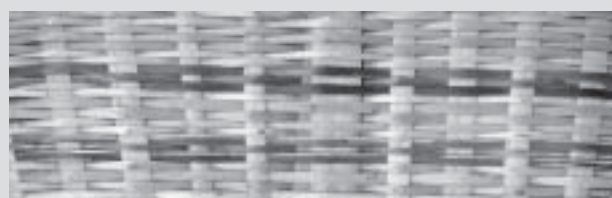
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Journeying Together for Peace

In the wake of threats and rumours of war, Asian people from all walks of life took to the streets, gathered together to pray, planned and took part in various actions for peace. Here are some that CCA News has collected so far.

Japan

A series of nonviolent actions have been carried out in Japan to oppose the planned US attack on Iraq. The Citizens' Network to Seek World Peace by Abolishing US Bases in Okinawa (Citizens' Peace Network in Okinawa) sent a delegation to Iraq during 13–21 January. Of the seven delegates, two were Christians (a clergy and a lay person of the United Church of Christ in Japan). The delegation participated in an international NGO rally in Baghdad and conducted their own peace activities, such as organising an anti-war peace concert. They also visited hospitals and orphanages where children are suffering from malnutrition and the after-effects of exposure to bombs using depleted uranium.

* * *

Another nonviolent action for peace in Japan was a twenty-four-hour sit-in in front of the US consulate building in Okinawa during the time of the Okinawa delegation's visit to Iraq. From 16 January there has been a sit-in in front of the US embassy building in Tokyo to oppose a possible attack on Iraq. Every day from 10 am to 2 pm some people have participated in the sit-in, singing, dancing and showing placards indicating opposition to an attack on Iraq.

* * *

One of the NCCJ vice moderators, Rev. Yoshitaka Kanou, began a hunger strike at his church on 7 February to indicate his opposition to an impending US attack on Iraq.

* * *

There has been a nationwide push to expand the circle of prayers for peace. This is being done at church worship services, house meetings and in daily prayers. Churches have also been urged to sing out a song of peace.

* * *

On 18 January, a day of world simultaneous peace action, church bells were rung at 12 noon for 10 minutes in Japan in solidarity with people who seek peace in the world. Many rallies and peace actions were held throughout Japan that day.

Philippines

The Council of Bishops of the United Church of Christ in the Philippines issued a pastoral statement on 31 January calling on its constituency to 'cry out for peace, say no to war'. The statement quoted James 4:1–2a: 'Where do all the fights and the quarrels among you come from? They come from your desires for pleasure, which are constantly fighting within you. You want things, but you cannot have them, so you quarrel and fight.' Claiming that peace-making is at the hub of the church's witness as an evangelical community, the bishops said, 'Without engaging itself in such a noble task, the church would sorely miss the whole point of its calling.'

The full statement can be found on the CCA website, www.cca.org.hk.

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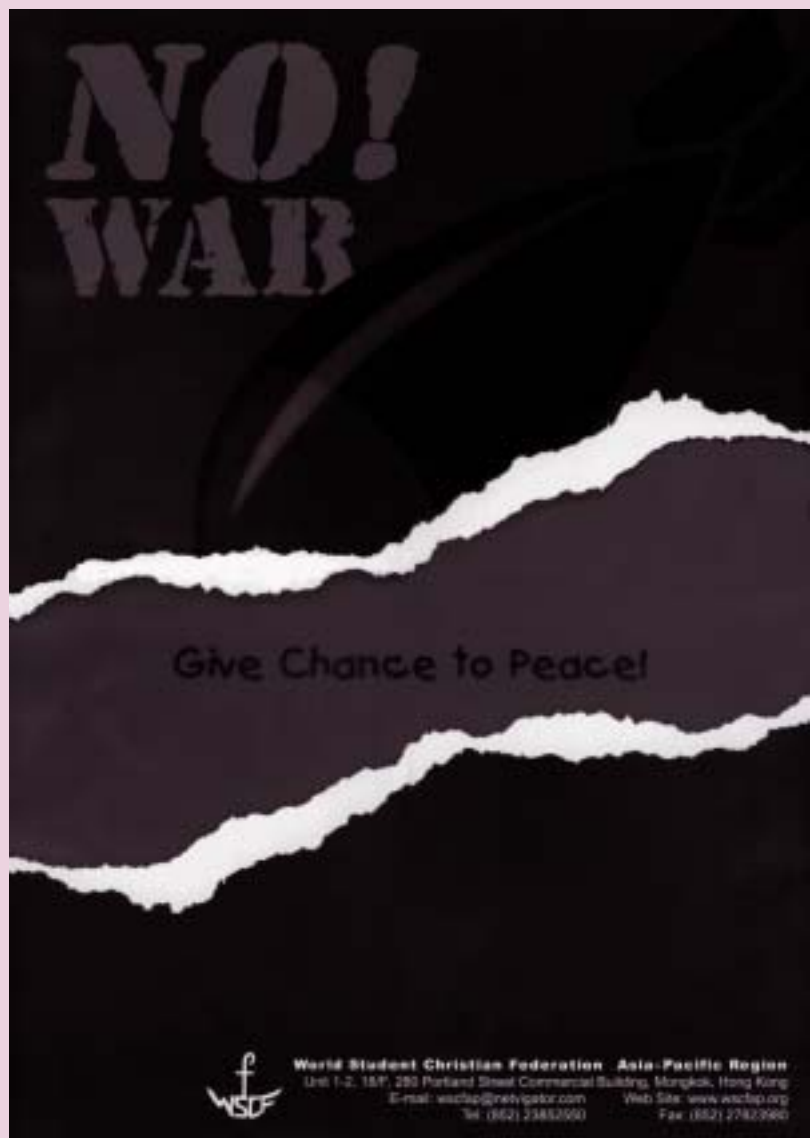
The Ecumenical Women's Forum on 14 February launched a month-long series of campaigns to oppose war in Iraq and the continuing presence of US troops in the Philippines. A statement read at the forum, of Protestant, Catholic and Muslim women, by EWF coconveners Carmencita Karagdag, a Protestant, and Sr Xavier Marie Bual, a Catholic, said, 'We, women, resolutely oppose the war on Iraq as unjust and immoral, a tragedy that can only mean dire humanitarian consequences like unnecessary deaths on a massive scale, wanton destruction of the environment and property, and large-scale displacement of people. We strongly object to the war, which can only eat up government resources that could otherwise be used to make available food, jobs, education and health care to the poor and needy.' Referring to the presence of American troops in the Philippines, the women affirmed, 'In the Philippine context, peace is not served by allowing American troops to use the country as a staging ground for US wars of aggression against Afghanistan, Iraq and other countries which have dared challenge the new empire. Peace is not terrorising the countryside with a military show of force by deploying more troops, including foreign troops, under the guise of joint military exercises. Peace is not waging a war on terror to counter terror. Peace is not treating lightly the peace negotiations and labelling political forces working for national freedom and sovereignty as "international terrorists". Peace means

adequate provisions for daily life, respect for dignity of human beings, regardless of race, class, gender and age, and integrity of the entire creation. For women today peace would mean elimination of all forms of violence against women, freedom from foreign intervention, and resistance to the global hegemony of the empire.' Women's month in March will be observed to reaffirm sisterhood and gain greater confidence in becoming conscious agents of change towards gender justice and social transformation. Celebrations will include a month-long series of campaigns, prayer vigils and mass protests to register commitment to peace and life. The forum was in response to the call of organisers of the International Ecumenical Conference on Terrorism in a Globalised World (which includes CCA) to declare 14 February as an international day of prayer, seen as a prelude to a series of internationally coordinated peace vigils and peace rallies. Launched at the gathering was the new booklet published by the NCCP Women's Desk, *Women's Voices to Overcome Violence*, which features reflections of ecumenical women leaders who provided inspiration to the International Women's Solidarity Forum that capped a three-day peace mission in Central Luzon. These two events formed an integral part of the historic International Ecumenical Conference on Terrorism in a Globalised World held in Manila on 23–26 September 2002 under the joint auspices of the NCCP, CCA and the WCC. After the forum the women joined the multisectoral mass action to oppose the US war on Iraq in Plaza Miranda and later at the US embassy.

The full statement can be found on the CCA website, www.cca.org.hk.

* * *

On 31 January, the national day of prayer for peace, the National Council of Churches in the Philippines issued a statement condemning the war footing that the US government is taking against Iraq. NCCP also condemned US plans to use the Philippines as a staging area or refuelling station for planes and ships of mass destruction in its war of aggression. Declaring that this war is unjust and must be stopped, NCCP lead-



WSCF Asia-Pacific Region

The World Student Christian Federation Asia-Pacific Region has initiated two important activities in response to the growing threat of war. One is a postcard campaign, 'Give Chance to Peace!', which is addressed to President George Bush. The other is the 'Skipping Meals' campaign, whereby staff in the Hong Kong office have pledged to skip lunch every Tuesday to save money for children in Iraq. They call on friends around the world to join them in this campaign, skipping at least one meal a week and sending the money saved to WSCF A-P. This will continue for at least forty days. Once the funds from the campaign are collected, WSCF will contact their office in the Middle East to arrange for the money to be used to assist children in Iraq. About 500,000 children have died horrible deaths resulting from the sanctions and depleted uranium left behind during the Gulf war. If another war breaks out, millions of people, particularly children, will suffer.

ers claimed, 'Now, as never before, is the time to "turn swords into ploughshares and spears into pruning hooks" (Isaiah 2:4).' The consequences of war, especially to civilians, would be tragic: civilians suffered and died when the US attacked Afghanistan. Thousands of Philippine overseas foreign workers in the Middle East would be affected adversely and the subsequent impact on the world's economy, especially in the price of oil, would further impoverish people in the country. On 14 February NCCP released a press statement appealing to the UN 'to remain resolute in not providing the US with a mandate to stage an attack against Iraq. Let your hands not be tainted by the innocent blood of millions.'

Hong Kong

In Hong Kong, representatives of various religious communities met on 24 January to share concerns about the crisis in Iraq. Affirming that their various faith traditions share the same commitment to peace and life, the group decided to work together as interreligious peacemakers and to hold the people of Iraq in prayer on the weekend of 14–16 February during their worship and religious activities.

* * *

On 16 February representatives from Christian, Muslim and Buddhist communities gathered for an interfaith dialogue and prayers for peace in Iraq and the world. During small group discussions, a number of the participants affirmed that education and personal relationships with one another would help foster peace among religious groups. Better still, dialogue among people of goodwill, not just people of different religions, would help bring about better understanding and more cooperation in dealing with life issues.

* * *

On 9 February, Filipino church leaders and groups in Hong Kong, including organisations working with Filipino migrant workers, held an ecumenical prayer for peace. The group prayed for peace in the world and in the Philippines, called for the resumption of peace negotiations between the government of the Republic of the Philippines and the National Democratic Front of the Philippines and for an end to the Bush administration's campaign for military attacks against Iraq. On 15 February religious groups and NGOs spearheaded the biggest peace rally ever held in Hong Kong.

Malaysia

The Council of Churches of Malaysia resolved in February to join in solidarity with churches around the world, and with all peoples of goodwill, to say 'no to war' by participating in the current national signature campaign and in peace rallies organised by civil and religious groups. 'War destroys lives and we are compelled by

the message of Jesus Christ to pursue the path of peace in the world,' the council statement said. It called on the international community, through the United Nations, to enforce security in troubled areas, ensure the safety of civilians and work for a peaceful resolution of issues through diplomatic negotiations. CCM also planned to hold a rally for peace on 9 March and asked member churches to say prayers of intercession in their services for the Christians in Israel and Palestine who seek peace with justice and for the people of Iraq.

Australia

On 10 February churches in Australia released a new peacemaking resource, 'Give Peace a Hand', containing practical ideas and biblical and prayer materials designed to strengthen Christian congregations in witnessing to the peace of Christ. Australian churches are saying that 'peace protests are not enough'. Referring to the government's efforts towards better security, the churches said that 'the real answer to terrorism lies in extending our compassion rather than further tightening our existing borders of fear and insecurity. What we require is a "pre-emptive strike" against global poverty, and this begins by creating ripples of peace throughout our personal and corporate lives.'

* * *

In mid-February, five Indonesian religious leaders, three Muslim and two Christian, visited Australia to spread a message of friendship, peace and hope as well as solidarity between Muslims and Christians in Indonesia. The delegation consisted of K.H. Hasyim Muzadi, general chairman of Nahdlatul Ulama, the largest Islamic organisation in Indonesia, with sixty million members, Cardinal Julius Riyadi Darmaatmadja, president of the Catholic Bishop's Conference of Indonesia, Rev. Prof. Andreas Anangguru Yewangoe, executive committee member of the Communion of Churches in Indonesia, H.M. Rozy Munir, chairman of Nahdlatul Ulama, and Abdul Wahid Maktub, special assistant to the general chairman. The delegation met key figures in government and their Australian religious counterparts. They told how many bombings in Indonesia that were often made to look like one religion had attacked another, an interpretation that would suit some interests, but which faithful Muslims and Christians know to be otherwise. The visit was on intergovernmental sponsorship. However, the delegation stressed the need for relational, noninstitutional links between religions.

* * *

In January, Muslim Australians offered special prayers for rain for the drought-stricken parts of the country, especially New South Wales and Queensland. The Australian Federation of Islamic Councils Inc. also collected funds from Muslim communities around Australia for drought relief in New South Wales. According to Dr Ameer Ali, president of AFIC, prayer for rain in times of drought is encouraged by Islamic faith.

Journeying Together with Our Neighbours

Celebrate Asia Sunday 2003

Each year, the Christian Conference of Asia invites its member churches and councils, as well as ecumenical partners, to celebrate Asia Sunday. Since 1974, CCA has set aside the Sunday before Pentecost as Asia Sunday to commemorate the founding of the East Asian Christian Conference (EACC, now CCA) on 24 May 1959. Asia Sunday has been an occasion to focus on a theme that highlights one of CCA's major concerns. Celebrating Asia Sunday is therefore an act of solidarity in reflecting on and addressing a particular issue together.

Since Pentecost Sunday falls on 8 June 2003, Asia Sunday consequently falls on 1 June 2003. However, churches are free to set aside any Sunday of their calendar year as Asia Sunday. For example, the Hong Kong Christian Council has scheduled it for 8 June 2003. It does not matter when it is scheduled—what is important is that you set aside one Sunday each year to celebrate Asia Sunday as an act of solidarity with Asian churches in their various struggles, as well as in partnership with CCA and ownership of the life and work of the ecumenical movement in the region through CCA.

Why This Theme?

Asia is a region of much plurality. While this plurality can be a source of pride, it can also be a source of pain. The many conflicts going on in various parts of the region are very often caused by our inability to deal with plurality and diversity creatively.

Among the issues of plurality that have become walls of division are differences between ourselves and others in terms of faith, race, class, caste, gender, sexuality, health status, disability, age, regional background, educational background, employment status and political views.

Thus, during Asia Sunday 2003, CCA would like to invite its member churches and councils, ecumenical partners and friends to think of ways of:

- fostering inclusiveness,
- reaching out,
- breaking down barriers,
- crossing borders,
- building bridges,
- closing the gaps,

'for we are neighbours' entrusted with God's own creation and called by God to live together in the 'whole household of God', the *oikoumene*. The theme is put in the form of a prayer response, affirming that indeed we are neighbours regardless of our differences and that we are responsible for one another.

The Format

Unlike in previous Asia Sunday booklets, CCA is not suggesting a full liturgy for Asia Sunday 2003. Instead, it is giving some ideas and suggestions of



what can possibly go into your liturgies and how you might celebrate Asia Sunday, not only liturgically but also educationally. We know that many churches have their own liturgical formats to follow and we respect that. Hence, we hope that the ideas and suggestions will serve as seeds for your own planning and celebration of Asia Sunday. Feel free to use what you can and even create better ones.

We have planned the materials for Asia Sunday 2003 in a way that can easily be downloaded from the CCA website. This is in response to several requests from member churches and councils who find downloading material much faster and easier.

Towards Dialogue and Inclusivity

As Christians, we are accustomed to using our own scriptures in worship and study. As an attempt to venture into interreligious dialogue during this special Sunday, we have incorporated some quotations from the sacred writings of other religious groups.

Please feel free to use or omit these according to what is most sensitive to your own context or situation.

It would be important to discuss your plans with your worship committee and to use this occasion as an educational experience of the many ways of recognising God, the Divine, even through other sacred writings or teachings.

Among the other sacred writings referred to are the Holy Qur'an (Islam), the Upanishad, Bhagavad Gita and Yajur Veda (Hinduism), and the Analects (Confucianism).

Another way to incorporate dialogue and ensure inclusivity is to invite someone from another faith community in your locality to give a greeting during the service. This is especially relevant if your congregation has had meaningful relationship with another faith community in your area.

Furthermore, as an attempt at inclusivity, we also suggest that leadership in the service be shared with children, youth and adults (women and men). After all, God's hospitality is so lavish that each one is valued dearly.

Pakistan's Blasphemy Law

The law on blasphemy has existed in Pakistan since 1927. But it was hardly used until a vague and arbitrary definition of blasphemy was inserted into the Pakistan Penal Code in the 1980s. Amendment Act No. III of 1986 amended Section 295-C to read: 'Use of derogatory remarks, etc. in respect of the Holy Prophet (PBUH): Whoever by words, either spoken or written, or by visible representation or by any imputation, innuendo or insinuation, directly or indirectly, defiles the sacred name of the Holy Prophet (PBUH), shall be punished with the death sentence or imprisonment for life and shall be liable to fine.'

By 1990, the death sentence was made mandatory for blaspheming the name of the Holy Prophet (PBUH). The amended sections are so wide that mere allegations of blasphemy are a very easy means to rope in anyone for any purpose.

Amnesty International has reported many blasphemy cases, against both members of religious minorities and also Muslims. A closer look into many of these cases shows that the law has in many instances been misused and abused to imprison people on grounds of religious enmity or for motives of business rivalry, personal grudges, land

issues or conflicting political interests. The mandatory death penalty for anyone found guilty of blasphemy contributes to a climate in which religiously motivated violence flourishes.

Furthermore, a number of senseless violent attacks have happened in Pakistan during the past year—including in churches while people were at prayer, in a Christian hospital and in an ecumenical interreligious NGO that worked for peace and justice.

While these could be part of a general reaction to the US-led war against terrorism, they have seriously shaken up the already volatile environment in Pakistan.

The work for conflict transformation and a just peace in Pakistan cannot just happen overnight. Dialogue is certainly not a first aid kit. Asia Sunday 2003 is dedicated to the long and difficult work of conflict transformation and a just peace that can only result when people, as equal human beings, can truly affirm to one another 'for we are neighbours'. Hence, your special offering during your celebration of Asia Sunday this year will be put together for the cause of holding up the victims of senseless attacks and those wrongfully accused of contravening the blasphemy law in Pakistan.

Invitation for Special Offering

During Asia Sunday we encourage churches to make special offerings set aside for a particular cause.

This year, in line with the theme 'For We Are Neighbours', we would like to give the offering to a fund to assist the families of those who have suffered in recent attacks in Pakistan and those wrongfully accused of contravening the blasphemy laws and their families.

You may send your offerings to the CCA and CCA will forward them to the appropriate body in Pakistan.

Requests for Translation, Distribution and Feedback

We would like to invite member councils and churches to translate this material for use in local languages or dialects.

Please disseminate it widely to your local churches.

After your celebration of Asia Sunday 2003, we also invite you to share with us what you did, whether the material was useful to you and your suggestions for next year's observance.

You may download a copy of the Asia Sunday 2003 booklet from the CCA website, www.cca.org.hk.

Journeying Together through WEAVE

*Women's Ecumenical Accompaniment for Vision and Empowerment—
a way of working out a vision of gender justice*

WEAVE. It images the ever-enduring creative work of women weaving from generation to generation in the many villages in Asia. As women weave, they create colourful patterns drawn from relationships with creation—trees, rivers, mountains, flowers, animals and many others. They communicate their life stories, struggles, dreams and aspirations in the pattern of weaving. As a creative process, weaving takes time and focused energy.

Drawing from the rich symbolism of weaving, WEAVE connects women as partners in a praxis of reflecting and doing and expresses the solidarity among women from different countries. WEAVE also images the diversity of strands of life—culture, religion and spirituality, ideology, geographical setting, ethnicity and many more—differences we need to consider but which also can be woven beautifully in openness, respect and tolerance to make a beautiful pattern for humanity and creation.

What Is WEAVE?

WEAVE stands for Women's Ecumenical Accompaniment for Vision and Empowerment. It is a way of working out a vision of gender justice. It is for the empowerment of women in the ecumenical movement, based on two elements: 'sharing of people' and 'learning together'. WEAVE aims at fostering partner-

ship among CCA member councils and churches in enhancing ecumenical women's leadership development and capacity building in serving church and community. This is within the spirit of partnership of women and men in church and society.

The First Project

The first WEAVE project is between the Philippines and Cambodia. The idea came out of an informal sharing between the CCA EGY staff, the General Secretary of NCC Philippines, Ms Sharon Rose Joy Ruiz-Duremdes, and the team coordinator of the Kampuchea Christian Council, Rev. Eang Chun, in July 2002 at the General Secretaries Meeting in Hong Kong. The KCC has just gained a Women's Desk after the Cambodian Christian Women's Association became part of the council. And they need help. The NCCP has a very active women's program and they can help. So WEAVE is born out of an expressed need and a willingness to help—a sharing of concern and action.

The specific objectives of WEAVE Cambodia-Philippines are to:

- help put in place a collective support mechanism for the women's program within the ecumenical structure of KCC,
- accompany the Women's Desk Secretary and core group in their leadership development and program management capacity building,

- assist in the ecumenical formation, capacity building and organisation development of KCC.

The Cambodian Christian Women's Context

Many years of colonialism, decades of civil war and the Khmer Rouge's genocidal rule had a devastating effect on Cambodian society, especially on women, who are gender discriminated and disempowered. For instance there is a very low 22 per cent literacy rate for women compared to 48 per cent for men. With the very limited resources that families have, parents prefer to send their boys rather than girls to school. With less access to education, they have less access to work opportunities, pushing them into sex work, being victims of the sex trafficking that is rampant in the Mekong region. With lack of access to information and prevention they are prone to HIV/AIDS.

Cambodia is one of the poorest countries of the world. It has the highest number of people maimed by landmines, left by the war. Cambodia has a population of 12.7 million, mostly belonging to the agricultural sector (75 per cent of the labour force), 90 per cent of whom are Buddhists, but with 500,000 Muslims and 60,000 Christians. Cambodians presently are on the road to rebuilding their society but still need a lot



of support from inside and outside partners. The Cambodia Christian Women's Association, officially recognised by the Royal government of Cambodia on 13 July 1994 as a nongovernment, nonprofit association aimed at making a positive contribution to the national reconstruction of Cambodia and upgrading the living standards of the poorest among the poor, especially women and children. It has twenty-two member churches with 297 individual members. In its July 2000 – June 2001 annual report, CCWA focused on three target areas for development work:

- Perk Phdao village, Rorakong commune, Muk Kampoul district, Kandal province, with 289 families composed of 1569 villagers.
- Kradas village, Taing Krasaing commune, Batheay district Camping Cam province, 184 families with 1050 villagers
- PLO Trees village, Chuck Kasha commune, Barry district, Camping Thom province: 337 families with 1780 villagers.

CCWA programs until June 2001 included a literacy program, an education program, a tailoring program, a weaving program, a rural credit program, a health education program, a spiritual program and staff development and organisational capacity building. These programs were sup-

ported by such partners as DIAKONIA, CRWRC, KSSA, AWRC, NCC Australia, NCC Japan Division of Christian Education, WCC, ICFLC, the World Day of Prayer, CWS New Zealand, ICCO and CCT. The Asian Women's Resource Centre partnership program on capacity building with CCWA was able to train thirteen women leaders through the Women's Alternative Leadership for Transformation program and thirty-five participants in Bible study workshops during 2000–2002. These people serve as a core group of women dedicated to serve church and community.

New Direction

On 26 January 2001 the Cambodian Christian Women's Association became the Women's Desk of Kampuchea Christian Council (KCC). Since that date there has been a gap in women's leadership and coordination of the ecumenical women's program, although a report was still accomplished until 1 August 2001. The CCWA structure was dissolved and nothing took its place as a collective support mechanism for the women's programme within the ecumenical structure of KCC. A Women's Desk Secretary, Eng Kim Chhourn, was appointed by the KCC Executive Committee in 2002. Unfortunately she died in February 2003. She has been succeeded by Saravy. But a more

sustained ecumenical accompaniment is needed since the staff lacks capacity to manage the program and has no women's group support system. Thus the CCA and the NCC Philippines are responding through the WEAVE program during this transition period for one year. Dominica Faurillo, the ecumenical accompanier from the Philippines, is an offering of the United Church of Christ in the Philippines to the wider ecumenical ministry. She comes with her long experience of being an educator from local to national levels of church work. As a leader, she brings with her the gifts of being part of various training programs offered in and outside of her country and the insights drawn from the experiences of ecumenical involvement among women. As she participates in weaving the strands of ecumenical life she is not alone. She has the support of ecumenical women in the Philippines as well as a support group of women in Cambodia. It is a weaving of lives moved, inspired, energised and sustained by the Holy Spirit!

Timor Loros'ae Too

Timor Loros'ae is in need! There is an urgent call for help! May this article touch your heart so that we can start with another one. WEAVE Timor Loros'ae?

—Cora Tabing-Reyes

Journeying Together with Youth in Pakistan

Discovering spirituality within an Islamic context

'If I knew I would have to die tomorrow,
I would plant an apple tree anyway.'

—Martin Luther

Such is the commitment of a Christian to the preservation of life in this world. In the Christian faith, life has a meaning much beyond that of oneself! We believe in a God that became Emmanuel so that we may understand the abundance of life.

On 28 July 2002 we initiated a course for youth that would address their questions about the faith that they experience in their own context. We formed a group of twelve regularly attending young individuals, although some did not attend all the sessions. We met every Sunday for fourteen weeks. On All Saint's Day (1 November) the group decided to host a seminar and share with

others what they had learnt during the past fourteen weeks. The seminar took place on 3 November and attracted over 170 people, mostly young, for a day of sharing, raising questions and exploring our Christian witness within an Islamic context. Lunch was served to all attendants. The gathering was diverse as it included a mix of Catholics and various Protestant denominations including

Pentecostals and Brethren. The most encouraging aspect was the level of excitement of the participants in sharing their thoughts.

The process that led up to this event was outstanding. It was open to all, thereby making it comprehensively a Christian group. It included both sexes, also a difficult matter for a group that was to meet every week for a long period of time. However, parents offered their support and the experiment of meeting in each other's homes made this cultural barrier easy to manage. In order to ensure 'freedom' to the youth in expressing their thoughts about religion and spirituality, parents were kindly requested not to sit through the weekly sessions! This was also well supported by the parents.

After a while the group decided to meet in the homes of youth they knew but who were not yet part of the group. Reaching out and finding welcoming people with wide open doors and hearts was a truly wonderful experience.

The group decided not to give itself any name. The reason? It wanted to emphasise that the unity in Christian faith is an experience that requires no other name but Christian! It also communicated to people that the group had no intention of turning into an organisation or 'church'—it was open to everybody.

The young people shared such questions as 'How do we respond when a Muslim friend says that our Bible is altered?' 'How is our fast different from that of the Muslims?' Many such questions come to the surface in the life of a Christian youth in an Islamic context. For the very first time some of these young individuals got the opportunity to freely discuss religious and social issues.

To structure our weekly sessions, we decided to study the Old Testament and see how it responded to the diversity of religious expressions. We focused on how the Old Testament came to life and was transmitted to us. Living in an Islamic context, the participants had come to believe that the Old Testament was also written like the Qur'an. To find that the Torah was discovered much later in the history of Israel and that the prophet Amos was perhaps the earliest



source of the Old Testament meant a complete reshaping of their views about scripture. Reading Amos with a commentary on its social context helped the students view the scripture as a living entity rather than being merely a thing to read during worship services. If these writings had a context, then our context suddenly became relevant to our spirituality!

During the 3 November event, the group made four multimedia presentations on the four areas linked to the questions of faith from their context: the Torah, the history of Israel, the prophets and unity amongst Christians.

The quality of research made while preparing for these presentations was comparable to that done by seminary students. For almost six weeks, members had met in smaller groups to share their findings and debate their views, involving research, questions and discussions in the context of discovering their spirituality within an Islamic context.

The entire event was planned, arranged and executed by the group—a wonderful opportunity to gain leadership skills. For a group of young individuals never before active in their communities to put together and host such a large event was an achievement in itself!

The group is not finished yet! They organised bonfires during the advent season and plan to study the New Testament along with the Qur'an in 2003. Please pray that this group extends itself further to people from diverse social classes. Also, in these days of uncertainty, where war is feared to disturb the peace of many around the world, please pray that the Christians of Pakistan will not be victimised for sharing their faith with those in the West.

—Amjad Samuel

(Amjad Samuel finished a master's degree in theological studies from Duke University in 1995 and has built an elementary school based on the Paideia Program. He initiated a group which would revisit its faith in the present context and to allow young people to approach the Christian faith on an 'interactive basis'.)

Sharing Resources in Asia

EETA: Implementing capacity building programs in the region

How do Asian churches utilise and maximise resources within Asia in order to strengthen individual and organisational capacities of churches and ecumenical councils? This question led the WCC Asia Regional Group to mandate the formation of an Ecumenical Enablers' Team in Asia (EETA), which will help by sharing resources of personnel and expertise with churches and councils in need.

On 19–23 January, the World Council of Churches' Asia Desk, in cooperation with the Christian Conference of Asia, organised EETA at a consultation in Bangkok, Thailand.

CCA facilitated the consultation through the program areas of Ecumenical Formation, Gender Justice and Youth Empowerment (EGY) and Justice, International Affairs, Development and Service (JID).

The consultation consisted of daily worship conducted by Cora Tabing-Reyes of CCA EGY and daily biblical reflections, led by Hope S. Antone, CCA communication con-



Participants at the Ecumenical Enablers' Team in Asia meeting in Bangkok, Thailand

sultant, Ipe Joseph, General Secretary of NCC India, and Sharon Rose Joy Ruiz-Duremdes, General Secretary of NCC Phil-

ippines. Dr Mathews George Chunakara, WCC Asia Desk secretary, provided input on 'human and organisational development of Asian churches and ecumenical movement'. The participants shared country situations on leadership development and needs assessment, after which they divided into workshop groups to plan strategies for capacity building training, organisational development and ecumenical formation.

According to Mathews George Chunakara, EETA functions to assist the WCC Asia Desk to implement capacity building programs in the region. EETA will do this by acting as a pool of resource persons for training programs in Asian countries and serving as facilitators in training sessions and workshops organised by churches and councils.

EETA will therefore help in equipping and developing second and third line leadership through ecumenical formation, pro-



Passing a lighted candle to symbolise sharing of resources and capacities at the closing worship of the EETA meeting

viding consultancy in appropriate areas of needs and developing skills in management and development, e.g. planning, monitoring, evaluation, writing proposals and reports, bookkeeping, accounting, financial management etc.

Capacity building for church leaders and the strengthening of organisational capacities of churches and councils are among the main priorities of the WCC Asia Desk. The need was reiterated at the EETA consultation by those coming from countries with young churches and by some councils facing leadership problems. Areas most urgently needed for capacity building are organisational management and staff development. These will include structural organisation, resource mobilisation, training of trainers, strategising/planning, project development, financial management, planning, monitoring, evaluation, reporting and governance.

Among the priority countries identified for capacity building were Indonesia, East Timor, Bangladesh, Nepal, Pakistan, Cambodia, Laos, China, Myanmar, Thailand and South Korea.

For ecumenical formation, subregional basic ecumenical courses will be planned for the priority subregions of South Asia (India, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Bhutan, Maldives) and the Mekong (Myanmar, Thailand, Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia).

Country-based basic ecumenical courses will be planned for the priority countries of East Timor, Bangladesh, Nepal and Cambodia.

Part of the sharing of resources will be identifying groups and programs that already exist in the region and to utilise these for the training of representatives from priority countries, or even to ask them to design a course for a certain group or country. Another way is to send some EETA members over to the priority countries to facilitate in the training.

EETA is currently working on a questionnaire that is aimed to help NCCs in assessing their needs and collecting stories, prayers and songs that may be used for the training and making lists of skilful preachers and Bible study leaders.

Youth News

National Youth Secretaries Meet

In a meeting on 11–16 November 2002 in Bangkok, Thailand, national youth secretaries and workers affirmed their faith, analysed Asian realities, and expressed their concerns about issues that affect young people today.

High on their list of concerns were the dangerous impact of globalisation on the marginalised sections of society, growing religious intolerance and extremism in the whole world, especially in Asian countries, militarisation and the long-term implication of the war against terrorism in Asia and how churches affected by power struggles among their leaders are hampering ecumenical work.

One of their recommendations was for the building of a more effective mechanism for networking, information dissemination and resource sharing. They asked the CCA to serve as facilitator of programs to strengthen local grassroots initiatives of church youth and students and to provide orientation to church youth and ecumenical youth movements. They also asked for the production of resource materials and modules for leadership capacity building and materials addressing the issues of

globalisation and terrorism. The meeting brought together thirty participants from national church councils and conferences in Aotearoa New Zealand, Australia, Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Japan, Cambodia, Korea, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Pakistan, the Philippines, Sri Lanka, Taiwan, Timor Lorosa'e and Thailand.

Inputs included an analysis of Asian realities by Prof. Surichai Wankaew, from the political science faculty of Chulalongkorn University in Bangkok, and on CCA Youth by Rakesh Peter Dass, CCA youth consultant. Bible studies were given by Rev. David Gill, pastor of Kowloon Union Church in Hong Kong, on the role of the ecumenical movement, and Rev. Freddy Knutsen, WCC Youth Secretary, spoke on the global youth movement.

EASY Net Core Group Meets

The Ecumenical Asia Pacific Students and Youth Network (EASY Net) Core Group decided at their January meeting in Hong Kong to focus on 'Peace and Human Security' during the Asia Pacific Students and Youth Week celebration in 2003. The group also approved the publication of an EASY Net resource book. The core group comprises regional staff, executive secretaries or rep-



National Youth Secretaries meeting in Bangkok, Thailand



EASY Net Core Group meeting in Hong Kong

representatives of Christian Conference of Asia Youth, the World Student Christian Federation Asia-Pacific Region, the International Movement of Catholic Students Asia Pacific, the International Young Catholic Students Asia, the Asia Pacific Alliance of YMCAs, and the World Young Women's Christian Association.

Following the agreed practice of rotating the moderatorship annually, Mr Kiho of IMCS AP was selected as Moderator of EASY Net for 2003. He takes over from Rev. Shin Seung Min of WSCF AP who was moderator in 2002.

Youth Consultation on Peace in Northeast Asia

A group of youth leaders and workers with youth from representative churches in Northeast Asia met at the CCA Centre in Hong Kong on 17–20 February to begin the NEA Peace Network, which will work at national, bilateral and subregional levels.

The network aims to strengthen various existing bilateral and multilateral youth exchanges and programs and to introduce new ones. It would be supported, regularly analysed, facilitated and updated by holding regular biannual subregional NEA peace consultations, coorganised by CCA Youth, in rotation in different NEA countries. The consultations will bring peace network activists, volunteers and leaders together

In the face of militarisation in many parts of Asia and the presence of foreign troops and external threats in Northeast Asia, the peace consultation was conceived to bring

together youth leaders from Korea, Japan, Hong Kong and Taiwan to discuss the effects of militarization and the role young Christians and churches can play in addressing its effects.

The first consultation will be hosted by the Ecumenical Youth Council in Korea on 23–29 November 2003 in Seoul, Korea. The theme will be 'To Be a Peacemaker: Overcoming Violence' (from Matthew 5:9). Issues to be dealt with will be militarism in Northeast Asia, people's security, economic dominance and globalisation and developing a network for peace in the area.

The next subregional consultation will be hosted in Hong Kong in 2005. Observers will be invited from other Asian countries affected by militarization.

Call for Internship with CCA EGY

The CCA Ecumenical Formation, Gender Justice and Youth Empowerment (EGY) program area announces the opening of two internship programs. One is for a youth internship, which aims to provide a learning opportunity for a young person in understanding the Asian ecumenical youth movement, theological and leadership formation and learning different faith contextualisation perspectives. This youth internship is from July 2003 to March 2004.

Specifically, this year's youth internship aims to:

- facilitate the publication and distribution of Asia Pacific Students and Youth Week 2003 materials,

- facilitate the implementation of the Northeast Asia Peace Consultation 2003,
- facilitate the implementation of the School for Ecumenical Leadership Formation 2003,
- work with the ecumenical youth movement in Asia and the Ecumenical Asia Pacific Students and Youth Network, through CCA Youth,
- facilitate publications of the CCA Youth network.

Application forms for youth internship were sent out in February to the youth desks of CCA member churches and national councils/conferences of churches, and is also downloadable from the CCA website, www.cca.org.hk.

The other internship that will begin this year is an EGY Internship that will run concurrently with the CCA Youth Internship, July 2003 – March 2004. This internship is specifically for women below 32 years of age.

The internship aims to provide a long-term initiative for young women leaders in the region to benefit from their work and experiences with CCA. The EGY intern will work with the joint executive secretaries of the Ecumenical Formation, Gender Justice and Youth Empowerment (EGY) program area. She will coordinate, develop, and implement programs for young women's leadership development in Asia. Along with providing an internship opportunity, the appointment aims to liaise with CCA women to continuously develop and facilitate young women's leadership development initiatives in the region.

Meanwhile, Chang Chung Chih, from Taiwan, the current CCA youth intern, will complete her internship on 31 March. Chung Chih's work with CCA Youth and EASY Net was commended by the youth network. CCA wishes her the best as she returns to Taiwan.

Youth Fund Advisory Group Meeting

The CCA Youth Fund Advisory Group, consisting of subregional representatives drawn from the program area committees of CCA, met on 17–20 March in Hong Kong to deliberate and decide on Youth Fund grants for 2003.

Affirming Jesus' Way to Peace

Sixth annual human rights training program

Every year, around Human Rights Day, CCA organises a Human Rights Training in one Asian country. At the sixth annual Human Rights Training held in Jakarta, Indonesia, on 8–13 December 2002 participants analysed the realities of poverty, injustice, violence and terrorism going on in the region. They concluded that in the face of such grim realities, 'it is tempting to answer force with force'.

After looking into the Bible, they affirmed in a statement that force was not the way of Jesus. 'The lesson that should properly be drawn from Jesus' instruction that we "turn the other cheek" (Matthew 5:38–44) is that even the proud and arrogant can be shamed when we stand with dignity and act against injustice.'

Recalling Micah 6:8, participants affirmed the call to action 'to do justice, to

love kindness, and to walk humbly with our God'.

The group recognised the burdens that people, stripped of human dignity, carry—violence against women and children, torture, militarisation, including the 'War on Terror', caste oppression, grinding poverty, globalisation, marginalisation of minorities, including indigenous people and those with disabilities, religious intolerance and fundamentalism and threats to environmental sustainability.

Declaring that poverty is a gross violation of human rights, they affirmed that the right to food, safe drinking water, adequate land and housing, health and a clean environment are fundamental human rights, which are intimately linked with rights to education, political freedom, freedom of religion, freedom of thought and expression, movement and freedom from discrimi-

nation of all kinds. 'To be God's stewards requires us to recognise that our faith without action is dead. Jesus urges us to heal, to be peacemakers, to sit with those who mourn, to give food to the hungry, to uphold the weak, to take women, youth and children seriously, to look to God for our security. In so doing we see the way towards a renewed humanity', the group declared in their statement.

The group named speech and prophetic action as the most powerful agents of change and silence and apathy as the most powerful agents of repression.

In commitment, they pledged to follow Jesus' command, 'Go and do likewise' by:

- acting as Good Samaritans in their own contexts, not only by tending the wounds of the survivors but also by ensuring the conditions and structures for safety and development for all,



Participants at the sixth annual human rights training in Jakarta, Indonesia

- sharing the burdens of those who suffer and those who struggle for justice and peace,
- lending a helping hand to those who are already involved in these matters,
- remaining in contact with each other in order to share human endeavours and achievements,
- encouraging churches and ecumenical organisations to strive energetically for the promotion, protection and advancement of human rights.

The full statement from the training program can be found on the CCA website, www.cca.org.hk.

People's Forum for South Asia

A South Asia people's forum is being planned for 13–17 August in Colombo, Sri Lanka. Sponsored by CCA and the WCC, and hosted by NCC Sri Lanka, the theme of the forum will be 'Building up Spirituality and Culture of Peace beyond Globalisation'.

Economic globalisation continues to draw many people into poverty while concentrating enormous wealth and power in the hands of a few people and corporations. Asia is also a target of the current war on terror, leading to violence and insecurity, especially in South Asia.

While the peace accord between the Sri Lankan government and Tamil fighters has brought hope for peace and stability to one country in South Asia, the ongoing dispute in Kashmir between India and Pakistan continues to bring uncertainty to the subregion. A peace accord without economic justice will bring turmoil and suffering to many. The revival of religious extremism and fundamentalism has brought violence and has taken the lives of many innocent people.

In view of this, the South Asia people's forum seeks to discover a spirituality and culture of peace in Asian religions and traditions, to promote interfaith cooperation among all believers, to strengthen networks among churches and URM in Asia, to build new awareness of the impact of globalisation and the war on terror and to reflect on the spirit of Bandung amid this globalised world and the war on terror.

Affirming Life and the Rights of Migrant Workers

'Affirming Fullness of Life and Migrant Workers' Rights in Asia' will be the theme of the joint consultation of the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan and the CCA FMU program area on 26–29 May in Kaoshiung, Taiwan.

Despite an increasing global commitment to the plight of migrant workers, there has been little improvement in their situation. With globalisation, a financial crisis, and the war on terror besetting Asia, migrant workers have become easy scapegoats for many governments' cost-cutting measures. Meanwhile, sending countries continue to hail migrant workers as saviours of their national economies despite the dangers and risks abroad as well as the psychological and social cost to the workers' families at home. Since 1980 CCA-URM has been involved in empowering migrant workers in Asia. CCA-URM founded the Asia Migrant Centre in Hong Kong.

In July 2001 CCA FMU, in cooperation with NCC Korea, Yong Dong Po and KCAO, organised the North East Asia Forum on 'Globalisation and the Right of Organisation of Migrant Workers', which recommended, among other things, national level echo forums, lobbying, training/education for women migrants, regional level information exchange, social analysis and theological studies and the subregional workshop in Kaoshiung, Taiwan.

The consultation aims to consolidate the movement of migrant workers in Northeast Asia, have an exchange among participants on advocacy and networking, strengthen the role of churches in caring for and empowering migrant workers, and establish a broader network among NGOs and churches on migrant worker issues.

Asia Ecumenical Academy

The Asia Ecumenical Academy, organised by CCA, will be held in Hong Kong on 3–23 August 2003. Its theme will be 'Ecumenical Formation for Mission'.

This is a three-week in-depth study to enhance the theoretical and theological resources of ecumenical leaders for their participation in the shaping of ecumenical movement.

As a centrepiece educational program of CCA, it will be implemented through the Program Area on Ecumenical Formation, Gender Justice and Youth Empowerment in cooperation with Faith, Mission and Unity; and Justice, International Affairs and Development and Service.

The general aim of the program is to equip ecumenical leaders by enhancing their capacity in rethinking the ecumenical tasks in the face of contemporary and emerging issues relevant to the churches' mission together in Asia.

Specific objectives of the program are to produce a pool of fifteen to twenty ecumenical leaders annually with a grasp of contemporary and emerging ecumenical issues, equip ecumenical leaders theoretically and theologically in their ecumenical engagements on peace issues, interfaith relations and cooperation, and ecumenical formation in the local and regional level and produce documents that will open up issues for discussion in the churches for contribution to the future shape and vision of the ecumenical movement.

The program is open to academicians, leaders in ecumenical organisations and denominational leaders below 45 years of age already involved in the ecumenical movement from three to five years.

The director of the program is Dr Preman Niles and resource persons include Dr Ninan Koshy, Dr Elizabeth Tapia, Dr Patricia Martinez, Dr Archie Lee and Rev. David Gill.

For more information contact Corazon Tabing-Reyes, Joint Executive Secretary, Christian Conference of Asia, 96, 2nd District, Pak Tin Village, Mei Tin Road, Shatin, N.T., Hong Kong SAR, China, Tel: +852 2691 1068, Email: coracca@cca.org.hk.



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Congress of Asian Theologians IV

The fourth Congress of Asian Theologians is scheduled to be held on 6–12 August 2003 at the Payap University, Chiang Mai, Thailand, with the theme 'Rebuilding Community: Asians in Search of New Pedagogies of Encounter'.

A pre-CATS Women's Assembly will be held on 5 August to ensure the full participation of women and the mainstreaming of feminist theologies and methodologies at the meeting.

The Congress will be made up of a combination of plenary discussions and workshops that seek to explore the theme and new areas in theological disciplines, as well as social issues. An ecumenical mix is also ensured with the active participation of the Federation of Asian Bishops Conferences (FABC).

The Congress of Asian Theologians (CATS) is a movement under the program area of Faith, Mission and Unity of the CCA. It aims to create a theological community putting a premium on the development of second-generation theologians in the region. CATS was started in Suwon, Korea, in 1997 and has been meeting every two years since.

Spearheading the congress are the Christian Conference of Asia (CCA), the South Asia Theological Research Institute (SATHRI), the Association of Theological Education in South East Asia (ATESEA), and the Program of Theologies and Cultures in Asia (PTCA).

CATS focuses on Asian reality and theology to generate and consolidate theological insights from the region's seminaries and research institutes, churches and congregations.

Asians 'in diaspora' or those living outside Asia are also included.

The aims of CATS are to:

- clarify, promote and enhance the cooperative process of theological studies and reflection among committed Asian theologians who are prepared to deal with critical Asian issues as part of the Asian theological agenda,
- vitalise, facilitate and foster a cross-fertilisation of theological insights and

studies among Asian theologians from various Asian contexts,

- serve and assist Asian Christian communities and people through articulation and engagement,
- witness to the Gospel among intellectual and religious communities through academic studies and existential reflection of theological issues in the Asian context,
- help in deepening the theological foundations of the ecumenical movement in Asia and in developing a new Asian ecumenical vision,
- assist in locating present and future ecumenically committed leaders for Asian churches and in providing ways and means to equip and to nurture them,
- participate in the ongoing studies and discussion of the wider international ecumenical theological community and make a distinctive Asian contribution to them,
- consider and develop a continuing structure for collective and common work among Asian theologians and assist in advancing and consolidating regional infrastructures for theological studies and education.

For further details contact the CATS secretary, Daniel S. Thiagarajah, at the CCA office, or by email: dsthagarajah@yahoo.com.

Asian Indigenous Women Overcoming Violence Forum

CCA, in partnership with the World Council of Churches' Women under Racism Program, is holding an Asian Indigenous Women Overcoming Violence Forum on 8–14 September 2003 in Chiang Mai, Thailand. The theme is: 'Indigenous Women, Peace Building and Conflict Resolution'. In general, based on gender, class and race analyses, this forum aims at enhancing indigenous and ethnic minority women's contribution to overcoming violence and increasing women's participation in decision-making processes in the pursuit of justice, peace and integrity of creation in Asia. The forum is for indigenous/ethnic minority women leaders with a base community from India, Bangladesh, Thailand, Malaysia, the Philippines, Indonesia, Taiwan, Ja-

pan, Australia, Myanmar and Aotearoa New Zealand who are actively involved as leaders in peace building and overcoming violence in the community. They will be recruited through the member councils, churches and networks for future accountability. As the participants are expected to do something after the workshop, a high level of commitment is expected.

Asia Religious Educators Forum

The Presbyterian Church in Taiwan is hosting the CCA-sponsored Asia Religious Educators Forum (AREF) II during 6–13 October 2003. The theme is 'Partaking of the Wisdom for Life: Ecumenism as a Lens in Our Life and Work'. AREF is envisioned as venue for conversations of educators in religion—those trained in and who are practitioners of Christian education or religious education in churches, seminaries and church-related schools. A sequel to AREF 2001, this year's AREF hopes to gather religious/Christian educators who are open to creative participatory learning with each other and with religious educators of other faiths. There will also be the opportunity to meet with local religious/Christian educators in Taiwan.





Sharon Rose Joy Ruiz-Duremdes

Sharon Rose Joy Ruiz-Duremdes

The first woman general secretary of the National Council of Churches of the Philippines is a lay leader of the Convention of Philippine Baptist Churches. Sharon Rose Joy Ruiz-Duremdes regards her work not as a career or profession but as ministry to 'challenge the mainline Protestant churches in the Philippines to journey with our people toward their vision of just and lasting peace'. Recalling her incarceration in 1985 for speaking against the bankruptcy of the Marcos regime, she said her involvement in people's struggle was partly influenced by her faith in God's people. 'Being persecuted for my principles helped me see that living out the faith is never soft or comfortable. That experience only deepened my belief in the correctness of my work. A lot of biblical passages which I had learned in Sunday school became living truths—no longer theological treatises or memory verses. My imprisonment clearly showed the connection between faith and praxis.' Of the ecumenical movement, she says, 'The sharpness of its prophetic ministry is beginning to be jaded with the focus on "broadening the ecumenical table". The challenge is to be as sharp and hard hitting against the modern forces of evil while engaging people to stand at the cutting edge



Govada Dyvasirvadham

of the work for social justice. Its priorities should be in the area of being the church as a movement toward the "new heaven and the new earth". It needs to seriously look at how its institutional trappings make it less a movement.'

Govada Dyvasirvadham

When the Rev. Govada Dyvasirvadham was elected to the General Committee, he was general secretary of the Church of South India. In November last year, after serving as CSI general secretary for five years, he was consecrated bishop of the Krishna-Godavari Diocese of the Church of South India. He is also on the Central Committee of the World Council of Churches. As CSI General Secretary, he designed the Department of Dalit and Adivasis Concerns for the empowerment of the underprivileged sections of society. Under his leadership, CSI has made a commitment to girl children. Bishop Dyva finds engagement with people a most meaningful experience in his vocation. 'People create a very powerful impact on my life. Their expectations, dreams, burdens, sorrows and the like become the responsibility of the church. Functioning as a general secretary means accepting this responsibility of translating their needs and trying to meet at least a few of them gives



Rohan Edrisinha

greater satisfaction', he said. Apart from work, he likes reading books and other expressions from both secular and religious publications.

Rohan Edrisinha

A lawyer by profession in Sri Lanka, Rohan Edrisinha teaches courses in constitutional law and interpretation of statutes and documents at the Faculty of Law, University of Colombo, where he has taught for over sixteen years. He is director of the Constitutional and Legal Unit of the Centre for Policy Alternatives, an independent public policy institute that focuses primarily on issues of constitutionalism, governance, conflict resolution and human rights. He is also involved in civil society initiatives to promote the peace process in Sri Lanka. He chairs the NCC SL Commission for Justice and Peace.

Rohan thinks that while the ecumenical movement has done well more still needs to be done. This includes consolidating the achievements of the past by broadening the 'ecumenical community' beyond the leaders and intellectuals to the 'average person in the pew'. Among its priorities should be an effective and intellectually rigorous yet loving counter to the rise of religious 'fundamentalism'. Beyond his busy life as a lawyer-teacher, Rohan enjoys listening to classical music and watching sports.

At the Crossroads

The Conference of Churches in Aotearoa New Zealand

It takes sixteen hours to travel from the CCA office in Hong Kong to my base in Christchurch. A journey that involves changing cultures, seasons and living space.

Aotearoa New Zealand lies on the very edge of the CCA map, where the boundaries of Asia and the South Pacific intersect, with our unique bicultural mix of indigenous Maori and Western European heritages, and Pacific Island and other multiethnic traditions.

We are a small country of almost four million people, proud of our distinctiveness, our pragmatic 'she'll be right' attitudes, our Labour-coalition government, and our anti-nuclear legislation. Tourists and outsiders associate us with the natural beauty of our land, our forty million sheep, the easygoing friendliness of our people, and as home of *The Lord of the Rings* (films) and, for some time, the America's Cup (yacht racing). Not so widely known are some of the hidden treasures from our innovative past, including being the first nation in the world to create a welfare state, give women the vote and provide pensions to old people.

Aotearoa means 'the land of the long white cloud'. 6 February is our national holiday, when we honour our founding document, the Treaty of Waitangi, which describes an agreement made in 1840 between the Maori tribal chiefs and the settlers, represented by the British Crown.

The treaty continues to be a source of misunderstanding and controversy between the treaty partners. Maori issues and grievances are being addressed, rights of self-determination are being recognised from national to local levels but as the *tangata whenua* constitute only 15 per cent of the population, there are growing numbers of New Zealanders and political parties who want to move past the treaty and treat all



Incoming CCANZ Executive for 2002–03: Fr Ilyan Eades (Antioch Orthodox, Presidium), Terry Leadbeater (Treasurer), Gerrit Sonnenberg (Quaker), Dale Peach (Methodist), Bishop Murray Mills (Anglican, Presidium), Dr Robert Howell (Quaker), Michael Earle (General Secretary), Rev. Max Reid (Presbyterian), Major Marilyn Goldsack (Salvation Army), Gaynor Larsen (Presbyterian, Presidium), Brett Callander (Salvation Army), Margaret Hamilton (Methodist), Rev. Sue McCafferty (Anglican), Fr Felimoun (Coptic Orthodox). Absent: Fr Bishoy (Coptic Orthodox), Rev. Struan Duthie (Anglican), Ellen Murray (Presbyterian).

citizens on the same basis. Our churches continue to have a critical role to play at this time to work with all parties in finding just treaty-based solutions.

With over fifty mainstream national denominations, churches and fellowships, the body of Christ in our country is very fragmented. While fewer than 8 per cent of the population attend church regularly, almost half the population described their religious affiliation at the last census in terms of a Christian church tradition. Buddhist, Hindu and Muslim each claimed 1 per cent, while the remainder stated no religion.

The Conference of Churches in Aotearoa New Zealand currently has eleven member

churches, with six churches from the Western tradition (Anglican, Methodist, Presbyterian, Quakers, Salvation Army, Liberal Catholic) and five smaller churches from the Eastern/Orthodox traditions (Antiochian, Coptic, Greek, Romanian, Syrian). The Associated Churches of Christ are an associate member. Between them they represent over a thousand parish communities.

The ecumenical movement in Aotearoa New Zealand has a long and proud history as one of the world's first NCCs (founded in 1941) with one of the first Orthodox member churches to join (the Greeks in 1947—before the World Council of Churches was established) and was a founding member of the CCA's predecessor in 1957.

In 1987 we offered the world a new grassroots ecumenical model that brought together clergy with laymen and women, youth and older, Maori and Pakeha, Protestants, Catholics and Orthodox. Decision making was by consensus. It was a powerful vision, with regional 'ecu-nets', regional staffing, and ecumenical programs established on evangelism, racism, overseas development, women's issues, public issues, justice, peace and service, unity, international affairs and youth.

Fifteen years later, this expression of 'being one' was dying. The structures of ecumenism were struggling. Organic church union was off the agenda. Joint projects had fallen apart to reassert denominational identity. The ecumenical Treaty partners weren't meeting, while the displaced church leaders were meeting separately. While several Orthodox churches joined, the Catholic Church withdrew their membership (1998), as have the Lutherans (1994) and Serbian Orthodox (2003). Elsewhere, the Evangelical and Pentecostal churches are creating a new national 'wineskin'.

The organisation's profile in the wider community was non-existent, apart from the excellent work being undertaken by the Christian World Service (now a separate agency). Many of the existing programs had run out of energy and people resources. Few grassroots parishes were aware of or involved in CCANZ programs. Relationships between member churches were minimal with half unable to attend national meetings or pay even the membership fee. Funding from member churches was in terminal decline, with staff reduced to a general secretary and an office administrator, both working on a part-time basis. It was time to prayerfully discern a new cause and direction.

Ironically, at the same time, the spirit of ecumenism is flourishing through earlier ecumenical formation. 150 parishes are functioning around the country as cooperating and union parishes. National ecumenical agencies are operating independently in their specialist fields in broadcasting, chaplaincy (defence, hospital, industry, students), education, international issues, overseas development, refugees, social services, tax, theological education and women's issues. National dialogues are taking place between individual churches. And there are many expressions of individual Christians coming together across denominational boundaries—some to protest together on social issues relating to poverty (e.g. Hikoi of Hope, Gambling Coalition), others to pray, retreat or celebrate together in their local communities.

So with these mixed signs of hope and brokenness, the last annual forum of the member churches agreed in September to close down all its existing programs, spend all of CCANZ's financial reserves and concentrate on a single new direction to develop ecumenical responses at all levels to the Decade to Overcome Violence (DOV). Robyn Cave has recently been appointed as programme coordinator with responsibility for the next eighteen months to stimulate and resource local parishes to work together on this theme and help make the ecumenical DOV(e) fly.

So we are not only on the edge of CCA's map. We are on the edge of the next gen-

eration's agenda, of our member churches' survival agenda, and of public awareness of where our common Christian witness lies.

But it is at the edge that our faith has always flourished through history. It is the place where the rubber hits the road, the place of change, transformation and new language. Our young people don't understand the old language of ecumenism. To them it sounds 'gobbledeegook/nonsense'. We need fresh images to engage them.

As a small, remote agricultural country, we are having to face up to the reality that we can't match wage rates in Australia, that we have a growing rich-poor divide, as well as some of the highest rates of adult imprisonment, youth suicide, juvenile crime and teenage pregnancy in the Western world. Tourists don't see the dark side of our community health and relationships, our ownership of over a million handguns, the daily violence vividly portrayed on our TV screens, the growing incidence of violence in our homes, schools, roads, sports, local communities and even in our churches.

So the ecumenical challenge is to understand the violence in our relationships, our local communities, our structures, our institutions and ourselves. To draw on our faith traditions and share our stories, experiences and resources. To name whatever denies us the love, trust and freedom promised in Christ. To seek practical alternatives to the world's ways of responding to fear and conflict. To find ways forward together that bear witness to the Gospel culture of

Fr Ilyan Eades Joins the CCANZ Presidium

At the recent annual forum held in Dunedin, the thirteen member and associate member churches of CCANZ elected Fr Ilyan Eades to a three-year term on the CCANZ presidium. Other members of the Presidium are Bishop Murray Mills (Anglican) and Gaynor Larsen (Presbyterian).

Fr Ilyan attended the CCANZ forum at the request of Metropolitan Dionysios from the Greek Orthodox church in Wellington. With half the member churches of CCANZ now made up of Orthodox churches from the East and over twenty Orthodox clergy based



Bishop Murray Mills (Anglican), Gaynor Larsen (Presbyterian) and Rev. Mark Gibson (Methodist) wearing the DoV symbol after the new DoV programme was launched in Dunedin (September 2002)

peacemaking and living in right relationships with our neighbours. It's a huge task ahead.

Yes, we find ourselves at the crossroads, but that is surely the place to be when we read the signs of the times in our own place, in the South Pacific, on the edge of Asia and the world community. So we invite the prayers of CCA member churches as we start walking down this new road, clothed in our vulnerability and brokenness, but knowing God's call remains in our hearts to just 'be church' together, the salt in our community and instruments of Christ's unconditional love.

To be faithful to that age-old vision from a small city called Christchurch is indeed a real blessing.

Kia kaha. Be strong.

—Michael Earle, General Secretary



Fr Ilyan Eades (right) with Fr Felimoun El Baramoussy (Coptic Orthodox church) in Dunedin

Migrant Rights are Human Rights

Siby Tharakan

in the country, it is significant that this is the first appointment of an Orthodox member to the presidium of CCANZ since Professor Barbu Nicolescu from the Romanian Orthodox church was elected to serve on CCANZ's first presidium in 1987.

Fr Ilyan is an archpriest from the Antiochian Orthodox church and has been serving the church in South Dunedin since 1992. This is the oldest Orthodox church in the country and dates back to 1911, when it was built to meet the needs of Lebanese immigrants.

The Antiochian Orthodox was accepted as a member of the former National Council of Churches (NCC) in 1982, some thirty-five years after the Greeks became the first Orthodox church to join the national ecumenical movement in this country.

The national Antiochian Orthodox church now has three priests, one deacon and a subdeacon serving a total of four small congregations in Auckland, North Canterbury (Ashley) and Dunedin.

Born in Auckland, Fr Ilyan is a Pakeha New Zealander who converted to the Orthodox faith in 1978. Before heading south, he had served the church in Auckland. On completion of his army service, he trained as a nurse and worked in hospitals and prisons.

He currently works with IHC as a supervisor of their organic garden project in Mosgiel. He knows Greek and Slavonic Russian, which helps him to celebrate the eastern rite with his multilingual congregation. He is married with two children and three grandchildren.

Fr Ilyan admits to some apprehension in accepting this important leadership role. He acknowledges he has much to learn about CCANZ and the ecumenical movement in this country but he is keen to contribute as best he can and share the wisdom of the Orthodox faith with its traditions of being the ancient undivided church since Christ lived.

Rev. Struan Duthie (Anglican) from Christchurch and Major Marilyn Goldsack (Salvation Army) from Dunedin were also elected by the Annual CCANZ Forum as new members of the incoming executive for the next three-year period.

On 10 December 2002, International Human Rights Day, the National Parliament of Timor Lorosa'e decided to accede to the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families. This will enforce the United Nations convention adopted on 18 December 1990. Timor Lorosa'e's ratification will be the twentieth, finally bringing the convention into force. The convention was acceded to by six Asian countries (Azerbaijan, the Philippines, Seychelles, Sri Lanka, Timor Lorosa'e and Tajikistan), six American countries (Belize, Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador, Mexico and Uruguay), seven African countries (Cape Verde, Egypt, Ghana, Guinea, Morocco, Senegal and Uganda) and one European country, Bosnia and Herzegovina. Another twelve countries have signed the convention as the first step towards ratification.

The Special Rapporteur of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights, Gabriela Rodriguez Pizarro, said: 'This is a great success for all those who have voiced the suffering of migrants and who have campaigned for the establishment of an international legal framework for the protection of the human rights of migrants.' The Convention offers a holistic approach to human rights of migrants and summarises in a single instrument a broad gamut of rights, including civil, political, economic, social and cultural. The convention also takes into account all aspects of the migration process to effectively protect victims of abuses in countries of origin, transit and destination, be they regular or irregular, documented or undocumented. The convention also plays an important role in preventing and eradicating the exploitation, trafficking and

smuggling of migrants. Besides establishing some obligations for states vis a vis migrants as individuals, the convention also provides that states cooperate in the formulation of migration policies and in combating irregular migration. It will provide information to employers, workers and their organisations about policies, laws and regulations relating to migration and assistance to migrant workers and their families. As human rights are at the heart of migration, it must also be at the heart of any migration management debate. As there is a growing recognition of the fact that contemporary migration is a process to be managed in a comprehensive manner, such a process must be based on the wealth of existing international human rights norms, principles and standards, including the convention.

It is a long-awaited, hard-won success for all migrants and those who have been struggling for more respect of the human rights of documented and undocumented migrant workers and their families, including the Global Campaign for Ratification of the UN Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families.

Following the UN General Assembly adoption of the convention in 1990, in 1994, at the UN Conference on Population and Development in Cairo, a small group of nongovernmental organisations and migration experts from Africa, Asia, the Americas, Europe and the Middle East laid the foundations for the global campaign.

According to UN estimates, there are more than 120 million persons living in countries other than their own. These includes refugees, migrant workers, permanent immigrants and others. The abuse of



basic rights and human dignity suffered by migrants has become a global issue. Violence against migrants is all too common an occurrence. The expression of xenophobic and racist sentiments against migrants, refugees and displaced persons has entered mainstream political and public discourse, not only in Asian countries but also in many countries in Africa, the Caribbean, Eastern Europe, Latin America and the industrialised countries. Migrants have become an almost universal scapegoat for rising unemployment, crime and a host of other social ills in many countries.

With the convention coming into force, the international community will be challenged to look at migration from a human rights perspective and not exclusively as an economic, political and national security issue. Under the convention, persons who qualify as migrant workers are entitled to enjoy their human rights regardless of their legal status.

The convention opened a new chapter in the history of efforts to establish the rights of migrant workers and to ensure that those rights are protected and respected. It is a comprehensive international treaty, inspired by existing legally binding agreements, UN human rights studies by experts and by the debates and resolutions in UN bodies over the past decades.

The convention views migrant workers as more than labourers or economic entities. They are social entities with families

and accordingly have rights, including that of family reunification. It recognises that migrant workers and members of their families, and being non-nationals residing in states of employment or in transit, are often unprotected. Their rights are often not addressed by the national legislation of receiving states or by their own states of origin. Therefore it is the responsibility of the international community, through the UN, to provide measures of protection.

For the first time, the convention provides an international definition of a migrant worker and establishes international standards of treatment through the elaboration of particular human rights of migrant workers and their families. These standards serve to uphold basic human rights of other vulnerable migrants.

With rising xenophobia and attacks on foreigners, the convention ensures protection to migrant workers and their families worldwide. It provides binding international standards to address the treatment, welfare and human rights of both documented and undocumented migrants and the obligations and responsibilities of sending and receiving states. It extends the concept of 'equality of treatment' between nationals and non-nationals, between women and men migrant workers, and between documented and undocumented workers. Overall, the convention seeks to prevent and eliminate exploitation of migrant workers and their families throughout the entire migration process. It seeks to put an end to the illegal or clandestine recruitment and trafficking of migrant workers and to discourage the employment of migrant workers in an irregular or undocumented situation.

The convention also establishes mechanisms for its implementation that provide new opportunities for increased participation from the global

community to protect the rights of migrants. That only six Asian countries (Sri Lanka, the Philippines, Azerbaijan, Seychelles, Timor Lorosa'e and Tajikistan) have signed the convention indicates that other major Asian countries are not seriously considering issues related to migration. Bangladesh and Turkey have at least signed the document as a first step towards ratification.

The decision of the UN to draft and adopt the convention was a strong statement of international consensus concerning the need for greater protection of the rights of migrants. That decision must be implemented through national ratification and legislation.

There is now more need than ever before to promote the development and application of international standards that underline the fundamental fact that 'migrant rights are human rights'.

(Siby Tharakan is the Assistant Director of the Ecumenical Christian Centre, in Whitefield, Bangalore, India.)



Ecumenical Think Tank

Rethinking ecumenism in a globalised world

Organised by the Justice, Peace, and Integrity of Creation (JPIC) Team of the World Council of Churches, the Consultation on 'Ecumenism in the Twenty-first Century in a Globalised World' brought together thirty-one church and ecumenical leaders as a think tank to deliberate on the meaning and role of ecumenism in today's context, and to propose ways of consolidating solidarity among churches to raise issues of common concern. The consultation was held on 1–3 February in Geneva, Switzerland.

Inputs were provided by Bishop Aldo Etchegoyen from Argentina, who commented on the theme, and Dr Ninan Koshy from India, who shared a reflection on 'The Context of Globalisation and the War against Terror: A Challenge to the Ecumenical Movement'. A panel consisting of members from Canada (Rev. Chris Ferguson), Russia (Fr Vsevolod Chaplin), Fiji (Lorine Tevi), and Kenya (Karimi Kinoti) shared on ecumenical challenges to the churches. Inputs concluded with Dr Konrad Raiser's 'response from the ecumenical movement to contemporary challenges' on the last day of the consultation.

Using Ninan's paper, the group reflected on the formation of an empire-building process by the US in an increasingly unipolar world. The realignment of geopolitics in the world purposefully dominated and manipulated by the US was mentioned. This has led to situations of hegemony reminiscent of empire building that, though the world has seen many times before in history, is happening for the first time after the birth of the ecumenical movement after World War 2. This has put the ecumenical movement in new and dangerous waters. At the same time, the ecumenical movement is undergoing drastic changes in its understanding and manifestation of the true meaning of *oikoumene*, where ecumenism is being seen in light of unity with, and in-



cluding, people of other faiths and even no faith. These dual realities of an expanding ecumenism and empire formation challenge the ecumenical movement at the beginning of this century. Based on that backdrop, the important outcomes from the consultation are summarised as follows:

- There is an urgent need for significant theological work on church and empire. The ecumenical movement lacks the language to communicate with its churches on issues of justice and resistance. There has to be deeper reflection in terms of the social, political and economic analysis of the contemporary realities. Such a reflection should also be a dialogue with agencies, institutions and other movements in order to have common analysis and strategies. A 'dialogue of civilisations' needs to be promoted.
- There should be initiatives towards an ecumenical social forum, consolidating and linking various social movements around the world. Such a forum should encourage churches also to be actively involved in social movements. In times where the sovereignty of many national governments has been surrendered to TNCs and international monetary institutions, social movements or people's movements play a crucial role as pres-

sure groups. Churches should build and support such pressure groups.

As a practical suggestion, a list of relevant social groups could be compiled from around the globe and brought in contact with each other through national social forums, regional social forums (like the Asia SF), or global social forums (such as the WSF). Such inter-linking facilitates sharing of stories, strengthens individual movements in their resolves and, importantly, provides joint action when demanded.

- There needs to be better coordination and relations in the efforts of the ecumenical movement at national, regional and international levels when dealing with common challenges. In other words there is a need for a clear linking in analysis and action with regional and national participants by the WCC. Such a cooperative and decentralised model is important to counter today's hegemonic forces. Such a model strengthens indigenous knowledge and is in support of the many alternatives out there. Along with facilitating local alternatives, the ecumenical movement should also strive to develop applicable national and regional alternatives.
- Finally, the work of the ecumenical movement needs to have an intentional interfaith, interreligious dialogue. Moreover, it needs to proceed from dialogue to joint action/partnership where possible. Especially in times of turmoil, we need to promote 'dialogues of civilisations'.

The churches, and their ecumenical movement, have a chance to take a stand. Justice and unity are important. However, in times where a prophetic vision is required, justice needs to take precedence. Our unity is for our witness. Unity without witness is not justified.

—Rakesh Peter Dass

Treasure in Jars of Clay

*A meditation by Lt Col. Ian Southwell on 2 Corinthians 4:1–17:
‘We have this treasure in jars of clay ...’*

Endeavouring to bring churches together in a common ministry has been an underlying theme of my ministry throughout the years. I am grateful to God for enriching experiences in the ecumenical scene in Zambia, the Philippines, Australia, Korea and now here in Hong Kong. I want to take this opportunity to thank all who have made my wife and I so welcome and for the opportunities to have enriching ecumenical involvement here. Thank you again for your friendship and your support.

My wife and I are leaving Hong Kong for our international headquarters in London. In our new appointment, we will be involved in leadership development, including policy making and implementation. No doubt there will be further opportunities to be involved in interchurch activities and to encourage our officers around the world to benefit from wider ecumenical contacts.

Allow me to say that I have felt there have been more restrictions on easy ecumenical dialogue in this country in comparison to some of the others in which I have worked! Perhaps this is because the Christian church is relatively small in Hong Kong. All of us feel the pressure to demonstrate that we have a unique role in the church scene. We all know that Hong Kong is a region in which there is high level of commercial competition. The frequently asked question, ‘How many members do you have?’ may be paraphrasing the deeper, unasked enquiry, ‘What is their share of the market?’ I do not think we need to worry. There are so many people here to lead to Jesus! And when mainland China reopens to easy religious contacts from the outside again, there are millions more!

Some of my friends outside the Army have shown surprise that the Salvation Army

has been interested in developing links with the United Wesleyan Graduate Institute to augment our theological education for officers and laypersons. Why not one of the other multiple theological schools here? (Perhaps they are not aware of our unique background that draws from Methodism, evangelical revivalism and Quakerism.)

Others, inside and outside, have been surprised that I have encouraged dialogue and cooperation with the Roman Catholic Church. I certainly come from experiences with ecumenical groups in other countries where the Roman Catholic Church at least is accepted as a member of the local Christian council or council of churches. While I know there may be historical or linguistic reasons for hesitancy in both directions here, I believe this is ground that is worth exploring.

The challenges for ecumenism here, however, do remind me a little of the challenges Paul faced with the church in Corinth. You will recall, from what we have as the first letter to the Corinthians (but probably his second one to them), that this was a church with internal divisions. Sadly, the ‘babes in Christ’ in this church tended to divide into quarrelling groups based around who had led them to become Christians! So, some said, they belonged to Paul, others to Apollos, some to Peter—or even to Christ (1 Corinthians 1:10–3:23)!

They were worried about spiritual gifts. How important was the gift of tongues, for instance (1 Corinthians 12 to 14)? What sort of system should be followed in worship (1 Corinthians 8 to 11)? Should women be allowed to take part (1 Corinthians 11:2–16)?

All of these matters seem strangely familiar in the context of the twenty-first century.

The Treasure Is the Ministry

What a good thing there were reasons for Paul to write his multiple letters to the Corinthians.

Scholars suggest that what we have as the second letter to the Corinthians, from which we read today, may have been his fourth letter to them. In it, he is defending his ministry. The latter part of chapter two and the whole of chapter three speak of his understanding of Christian ministry.

- This ministry is triumphant (2:14).
- The ministry is ‘not-for-profit’ (2:17).
- God alone makes us competent as ministers of the new covenant (3:6).
- This new covenant ministry is a lasting ministry (3:14–17)—unlike the old covenant based on God’s revelation to Moses.
- The ministry is transformational (3:18). When we know the Lord’s glory in our lives, we are transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory.
- This ministry brings light to a dark world (4:4).
- This ministry provides the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ (4:6).

This ministry, then, is the treasure that we have in jars of clay (4:7)—the text and our focus for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity. What a glorious ministry with which we are entrusted! The ministry of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ has surpassed the old covenant of rules and regulations.

Paul knew all about this from personal experience. From being a persecutor, Paul had become a missionary. God called him to carry the message to as many people as possible. The treasure we have is our new covenant ministry of the Gospel.

This leads me to my second point!

The Treasure Is To Be Shared

Unlike the treasures of this world that people tend to hoard for themselves, we are called to give away this treasure. This world is a world of darkness. 'The god of this age has blinded the minds of believers, so that they cannot see the light of the Gospel of the glory of Christ, who is image of God.' (4:4)

Our Lord said that, like a lamp placed on a lampstand, we should let our light shine so that people would see our good deeds and so bring praise and glory to his Father (Matthew 5:14, 15). We are called to be light-bearers.

Perhaps the 'vessels of clay' that Paul had in mind were the small clay lamps that were available in those days—and which I know were available ten years ago in Israel when my wife and I visited. These lamps are very small and very fragile. Yet with the oil in them drawn out in combustible quantities by a wick and set alight, they can have an influence that is out of all proportion to their size.

A world that constantly hears of wars or rumours of wars certainly needs light. Light is needed in a community in which there is fear and uncertainty—whether within the nation, the estate in which we live, amongst refugees or within the family. The ministry of the light of the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ is widely needed today in Hong Kong and beyond.

You and I are called to be light carriers. Our task is to carry the light of the Gospel to others. We are fragile creatures. Life is uncertain. Accidents, diseases, and circumstances can all result in us being broken. While we may be fragile, the all-surpassing power of God is our strength—even as the oil in the lamp and wick provide the basis for the light. The power is not from the clay vessel itself—it is not from us! The Holy Spirit provides the spark to ignite the light.

Even though we may be (4:8–11) 'hard-pressed on every side, we are not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed. We always carry around about in our body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our body. For we who are alive are always be-

ing given over to death for Jesus' sake, so that his life may be revealed in our body.' Paul knew all about this. His catalogue of sufferings for Christ's sake (chapter 11) assures us that he is not an ivory tower theorist!



The Treasure Is More Important than the Containers

The important thing for a lamp is to be so placed that the light can be seen—not that the container can be seen. This truth applies to us individually. I believe that this truth applies to our 'collective selves'. The churches in which we are based are also clay vessels from which the light of the Gospel must be seen.

Unfortunately, there is a tendency amongst us all to want to be visible! Those of us in pastoral or church leadership want to have the biggest church, the biggest congregation, the loudest music and the most exciting—or the most Bible-based—worship! While visibility may be a good thing, our essential task is not to be visible ourselves—but to make Christ visible.

Our denominations are also like clay vessels. The reason for our existence as organised churches, with all our variations and special emphases, is communicating

the message that we carry—the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ (4:6)—nothing else!

We will do it in our worship, in our preaching, in our teaching of God's people and in our compassionate care for those in need. Isn't this what Christ did himself? He calls us to do the same. 'Self-display' can spoil our denominations, our churches and us as individual light-carriers.

A few years ago at a conference for Salvationist leaders in Korea, the corps sergeant-major of our Sydney Congress Hall Corps was one of the speakers. His name was Ken Heffernan. In other denominations, he would be described as the senior layman or senior steward. Sydney Congress Hall is like many other big, city churches. It has good music and good programs. Some of you would know that characteristically within the Salvation Army we often have brass bands and songsters—our worship band and our choir. In Sydney Congress Hall, these groups are very proficient and very powerful. They are used in all sorts of civic and interchurch events, as well as on the streets of Sydney and in the worship of the church (corps) itself. You have to be a good musician to be included in these groups. Salvationists travel kilometres from all over the greater Sydney area to be involved. Corps Sergeant-Major Heffernan made a very interesting point. He said that the emphasis of his officer (minister) and himself as a senior lay leader was to encourage all concerned in these sections to 'keep the path to the cross clear by making sure that the glory [for all they do] goes to the Lord'. He and his officer realised how easy it was for the desire for self-glorification to be so great that even good sections within the corps (church) could block the path of people coming to the cross and finding Christ as Saviour at the cross. The path must be clear! To return to the metaphor used by Paul: the light must be seen—not the container.

Application

The clay vessels of church sections need to understand the purpose of the vessels. They exist to radiate the light of the Gospel—nothing else!

Memoir in Dialogue

Our churches are clay vessels containing wonderful treasure. As church leaders, we need to help them to understand their fragility and their glory. They exist to radiate the light of the Gospel—nothing else!

Our church denominations are clay vessels. They are fragile, but tempted to grandeur. They need also to understand the purpose of their existence. As church leaders, we need to help them to understand their fragility and their glory. They exist to radiate the light of the Gospel to those within and those outside or the Christian fellowship—nothing else!

You and I are clay vessels. If God has transformed our lives—and, hopefully, is continually transforming them from one degree of glory to another—then we are called to take that treasure and radiate it in such a way that men and women and boys and girls step into God's light in order to experience that treasure themselves.

We need to give the glory to God so that the path to the cross is clear. We exist to show the way to God through Christ—nothing else!

During this week of prayer for Christian unity, may we daily focus our attention on the reason for our existence as Christian churches! Our unity is not based on any commonality of liturgy, vestments, worship style, church architecture or church government.

Our unity should be based on the common treasure we hold and the light we radiate: 'the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ', a treasure communicated so that others will know the 'all-surpassing power' and experience transformation into the glory of God.

We exist to radiate the light of the Gospel—nothing else!

Let it begin with us—let it begin with me!

May God bless you!

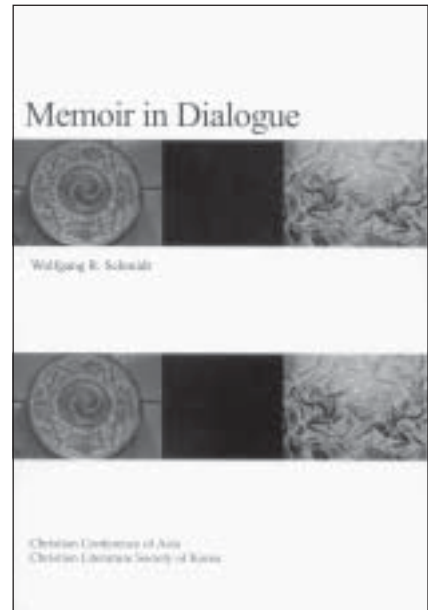
(This meditation was shared at the Joint Ecumenical Communion Service in Hong Kong on 23 January during the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity by Lt Col. Ian Southwell, then Officer Commanding the Salvation Army Hong Kong and Macau Command.)

Wolfgang Schmidt's book is an intimate, personal description of his rich experiences of ecumenical partnership with Asian peoples as the representative of Western agencies of mission and development and of public (political and social) organisations during the three decades of the 1970s to the 1990s. The book is one of the first public accounts of an NGO officebearer of the 'development' decades.

It is a vivid, lucid description of the author's stance of strong solidarity and deep engagement in ecumenical partnership with the peoples and churches of such Asian countries as Thailand, Korea, China, Malaysia, Vietnam and Laos, acting for the Northern ecumenical agencies of the World Council of Churches, the German Bread for the World, and Basel Mission. It details a number of concrete cases of ecumenical partnership in solidarity.

The book's format is unique—Asian leaders of the partnership engage in dialogue with the author through their responses to each chapter. These Asian leaders are Dr U Kyaw Than, Tran Ngoc Bau, Prof. Kim Yong-Bock, Prof. Philip Wickeri, Prof. Amnuay Tapingkae, Dr Sulak Sivaraksa, and S.M. Mohamed Idris. Dr Ahn Jae Woong, General Secretary of the Christian Conference of Asia, has written the preface of the book and Rev. Dr Sang Jung Park, former General Secretary of CCA, introduces the author on the basis of their deep personal friendship.

It is an insightful book, revealing in-depth stories of both crisis and success in a variety of situations that have faced the Asian ecumenical movement. It reveals transparently how partnerships have worked between ecumenical agencies and peoples' groups and churches in Asian countries and in this respect is unusual. Through his personal stories the author exposes the limits of existing ecumenical rules and practices and tells how his actions challenged those limits to reach the goal of true solidarity with Asian people. His actions are deeply trusted and his loyalty to the agencies is unwavering, though he has



Wolfgang Schmidt, *Memoir in Dialogue*, Seoul: CCA and CLSK, 2002, 447 pp, ISBN 962-7439-30-4, Price: US\$15

always taken a realistic line. For example, the Western agencies, especially church agencies, were reluctant to take a political stance for the people with whom they were in partnership. Churches in the West as well as in Asia have raised no questions about their own political positions, which reflected the interests of the dominant political power (governments or parties). But when it came to the political position of people who were struggling for social and political transformation, they were different. The author raises the question of solidarity with people in this context. His personal story of action and engagement in the ecumenical partnership unveils the importance of the personal commitment of the ecumenical leader, and the essential requirement of deep trust among participating leaders, whether one is from the West or from Asia.

I highly recommend this book to students of the ecumenical movement and its praxis, as well as to ecumenical workers and church leaders who are engaged in ecumenism, and to scholars of the ecumenical movement and history. The book is not

intended to account objectively for those events in which the author participated, but he has tried to give an account in terms of the spirit of solidarity as the core of ecumenical partnership with the people. It is therefore a witness as well as a textbook for ecumenical leadership training.

In his epilogue the author projects the future direction of the ecumenical movement. This vision emerges out of an honest and intensive dialogue with Asian ecumenical partners as well as Asian ecumenical leaders. He describes the future ecumenical journey as that of 'solidarity' for life. He believes that traditional concepts of solidarity are outdated and too confining, and calls for a new and inclusive solidarity of the whole of life on earth, radically local and radically universal in this globalising world. This is the birth of a new ecumenical vision and a creative proposal for its practice.

Dr Wolfgang Schmidt served the ecumenical movement as Executive Secretary of the World Council of Churches' Commission on the Churches' Participation in Development (CCPD). In particular, he was responsible for the Network and for the Ecumenical Development Fund (1977–86). He served the Basel Mission, in Basel, Switzerland, as Indonesia Secretary and as President (1989–98). He received the degree of Doctor of Human Letters h.c. from Silliman University, Dumaguete City, the Philippines, in 1990.

Ordained as pastor of the Evangelical Church in Rhineland (1962), he worked as an ecumenical consultant with the Protestant Church of Nias (BNKP) in Indonesia (1962–67). He held the position of the first Liaison Pastor for Mission and Ecumenical Relations for the Evangelical Church in Hessen-Nassau, Germany (1968–70), and

thereafter he was Asia Secretary with Bread for the World, Diakonisches Werk, of the Evangelical Church in Germany (1970–77).

I am happy that he has written such a valuable book to share his profound experiences and his far-reaching vision for the ecumenical movement. One day I hope that his book will be translated into Korean for wider reading.

The book will serve ecumenical historians as well as ecumenical leaders of action in the world. Readers, especially Asian readers, will agree with me that the book is an event to be celebrated in the ecumenical movement.

—Kim Yong-Bock

(Prof. Kim Yong-Bock is chancellor of the Advanced Institute for the Study of Life, Asia Pacific Graduate School for the Study of Life, Korea.)

Scripture, Community, and Mission

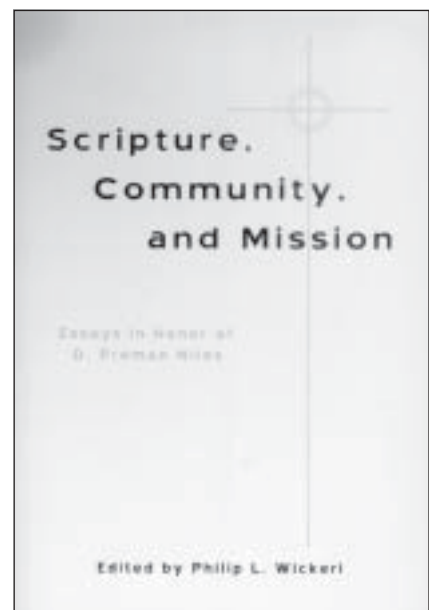
A festschrift for D. Preman Niles, this book is a collection of papers and presentations from a meeting on the same title, 'Scripture, Community and Mission', organised under the Network for Theological Enquiry, a program of the Council for World Mission. The papers were either delivered or con-

ceived in that meeting in Chennai, in January 2002, or solicited from those who have been close to Preman in his lifelong journey in mission.

The book brings a variety of contributions from biblical scholars and theologians. The theme brings together three



Dr Preman Niles, former General Secretary of the Council for World Mission, during the book launch on 11 January at the YMCA Salisbury in Hong Kong. Among those present to launch the book was the current CWM General Secretary, Rev. Dr Desmond van der Water (seated, second from left)



Philip L. Wickerl (ed.), *Scripture, Community and Mission: Essays in Honor of D. Preman Niles*, Hong Kong: CCA and CWM, 2002, Price: US\$ 15

distinct yet interrelated and interwoven areas of interest, exploration and concern amongst individuals and communities of faith.

For orders, contact cca@cca.org.hk.

Asian Christian Theologies

A three-volume research guide to authors, movements and sources on Asian Christian theologies has recently been published. It presents a comprehensive fully representative guide to study and research in the contextual theologies of every country in the Asian region from the seventh to the twentieth centuries.

The central purpose of the research guide is to outline the key sources for a study of Asian theologies that have arisen from, and fed, Christian life in a particular country or region.

These are contextualising, incarnational or local theologies that discover within a people's present struggle and aspiration and in their creative cultural and religious traditions the presence of the same liberating and transforming Spirit known in Jesus the Christ.

Regional and country chapters provide entries, with full bibliographies, for the widest range of persons, movements and publications, set within their historical and religious context, with particular emphasis on sources previously unavailable from earlier periods, and from centres, movements and women's networks. The production of

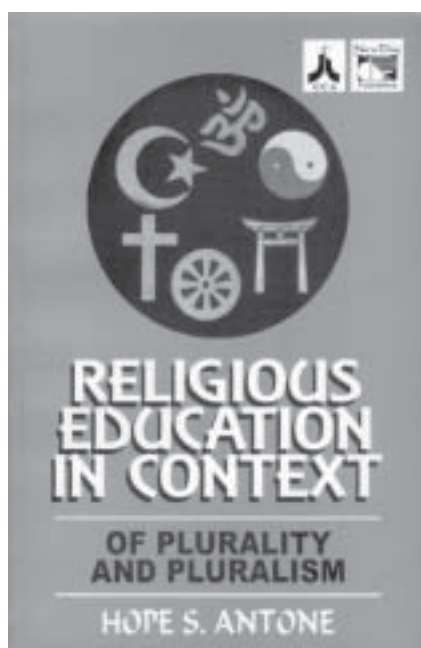
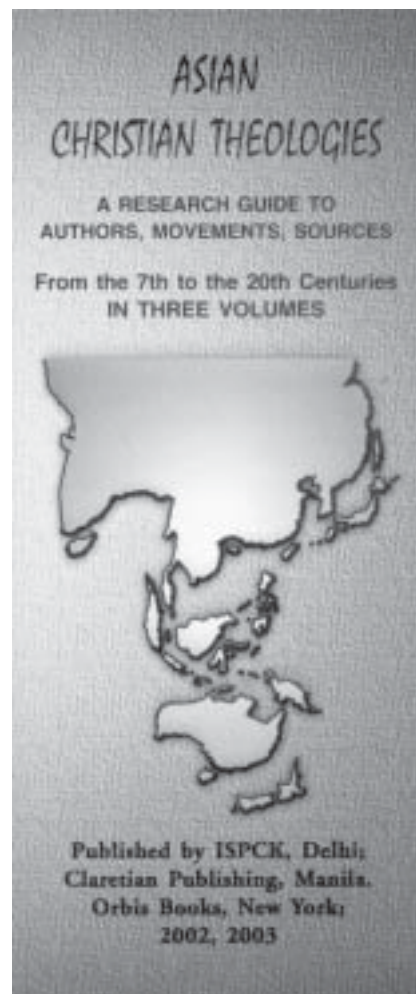
this publication has continued since 1998, with the participation of scores of contributors and editors throughout the region.

Here is theological reflection and construction in diverse models since the seventh century: both critical and doxological, non-dualistic and communitarian, dialogical and confessional, dissident and devotional, historical, heuristic and pragmatic.

The regional and global sponsoring agencies of the work are the Christian Conference of Asia, the Asian Pacific Missiological and Research program with Missio (Aachen) and the Council for World Mission (London).

For further information write to Research Guide to Asian Theologies, Pulit Candraditya, Jalan Lero Wulan No. 1, Weklau-Maumere 86112, Flores, Indonesia (johnotomo46@hotmail.com) or 13 Hilldale Place, Christchurch 8002, New Zealand (ritajohnengland@clear.net.nz).

The publication is available from ISPCK in India (www.ispck.org.in), Claretian Publications in the Philippines (www.bible.claret.org) or Orbis Books in North America and Europe (www.orbisbooks.com).



Religious Education in Context of Plurality and Pluralism

This book, written by Hope Antone, CCA's communication consultant, offers students, teachers and practitioners of Christian education and religious education a way of contextualising education theory. The book looks at Asian religious cultural plurality and critiques traditional typologies for dealing with it. It focuses on religious pluralism, which includes a commitment to one's faith and openness to other faiths, and high-

lights the historical, educational, theological, biblical and cultural bases for pluralism. Using 'an invitation to the table community' as metaphor for religious education that deals with plurality and pluralism, the book suggests possibilities for relating education theory to other issues such as globalisation and fundamentalism.

A book launch was planned by the National Council of Churches in the Philippines Christian Education and Nurture program unit in time for a meeting of Christian Educators and Vacation Teachers' Training in Davao City on 13 March. For orders, contact newdayorders@edsamail.com.ph.

Hope S. Antone, *Religious Education in Context of Plurality and Pluralism*, Hong Kong: CCA, and Philippines: New Day Publishers, 142 pp, US\$10

People

Aotearoa New Zealand

The Rev. **Robyn Cave** has been appointed national program coordinator of the Conference of Churches in Aotearoa New Zealand (CCANZ). Her task is to coordinate and stimulate ecumenical responses in the country to the Decade to Overcome Violence. An ordained minister of the Anglican Church, Robyn has served in suburban and rural parishes and as a school chaplain, then as associate dean at Christchurch Cathedral. She has a deep commitment to ecumenism, social justice and bicultural development and describes herself as a communicator, liturgist and educator 'where I enjoy and receive energy from being on the cutting edge'.

Australia



James Haire

The Rev. Prof. **James Haire** has been appointed executive director of the Australian Centre for Christianity and Culture, an ecumenical focus for Australia, situated in the national capital, Canberra. Currently president of the Uniting Church in Australia and chairperson of the Australian National Heads of Churches, he is highly respected across all Christian denominations and well known in Asia, particularly in Indonesia. Recently he attended a forum in Jayapura in West Papua, with church leaders in Eastern Indonesia and the West Papua Govern-

ment, looking at the future social life of the people of West Papua. Prof. Haire has contributed significantly to current moral and social justice issues. A consummate communicator, his gifts and skills are constantly sought by the media

Rachel Kronberger was ordained a minister of the Uniting Church in Australia on 11 December in Melton, Victoria. Rachel is a member of the CCA Program Area Committee on Faith, Mission and Unity.

Bangladesh

The new executive director of the Christian Commission for Development in Bangladesh (CCDB) is **Joyanta Adhikari**. He has worked with the United Nations World Food Program, with responsibilities for rural and vulnerable group development, refugee operations and disaster preparedness. He is also active in the ecumenical movement, being the moderator of the education department of NCC Bangladesh

The Rev. **Paul Sarkar** was consecrated bishop of the Church of Bangladesh on 5 January. Previously he taught systematic theology, ecumenism and interreligious dialogue in a seminary in Bangladesh. He also served as General Secretary of SCM in Bangladesh.

Hong Kong

Lt Col. **Ian Southwell**, officer commanding the Salvation Army Hong Kong and Macau Command, has been posted, together with his wife **Sonia**, to the Salvation Army International Headquarters in London. There they will be responsible for International Training and Leadership Development. He will be succeeded by Lt Col. **Tan Thean Seng**.

India

The Rt Rev. **Govada Dyvasirvadam** was consecrated bishop of the Krishna-Godavari Diocese of the Church of South India on 24 November at St Andrew's Cathedral, Masulipatnam. Govada served as General Secretary of CSI for five years and is on the central committee of the World Council of Churches as well as the general committee

of the Christian Conference of Asia. Succeeding him as CSI General Secretary is **Dr Pauline Sathyamoorthy**, formerly a teacher in India.



Kuncheria Pathil

Prof. Dr **Kuncheria Pathil**, CMI, Indian theologian and comoderator of the Congress of Asian Theologians, has been appointed president of the Dharmarram Vidya Kshetram, the Pontifical Athenaeum of Philosophy and Theology, in Bangalore, India. The appointment was made by the Pontifical Council for Catholic Education in the Vatican. Kuncheria is a professor of systematic theology and ecumenics. He has a doctorate in ecumenics from the Catholic University of Louvain, Belgium (1981). He is a current member of the Asia Ecumenical Committee, the joint committee of CCA and FABC. He is author of *Models in Ecumenical Dialogue* (1981) and *Indian Churches at the Cross-Roads* (1995).

Indonesia

The Gereja Kristen Sumba elected a new general secretary: Rev. **D. Umbu Dingu**. He succeeded the Rev. **Yosua K. Bili**.

The GPKB (Gereja Punguan Kristen Batak), the Batak Christian Community Church, has new leadership since their General Synod elections in May. Elected were Rev. **Alboin Sibarani** as Ephorus (Bishop) and Rev. **Marihot Siahaan** as General Secretary.

Towards a People's Forum on Peace for Life

As a follow-up action to the September 2002 International Ecumenical Conference on Terrorism in a Globalised World in Manila, representatives of the organisers decided to hold a 'People's Forum on Peace for Life', which will hopefully lay the grounds for establishing a movement promoting a people's alternative vision for peace and security.

The Forum on Peace for Life is planned for 30–31 May in Seoul, involving fifteen people, mostly drawn from the Manila conference participants, who will give practical shape to the concept of an ecumenical, interfaith and interreligious people's forum. It is hoped that the workshop and process will promote a new, creative and imaginative style that will help stimulate the crea-

tion of a new ecumenical movement for peace grounded on a new geopolitical understanding and analysis.

The group considered the Manila conference as a major contribution to the Ecumenical Decade to Overcome Violence. It was decided that clusters of concerns will be handled by the three organisers: concerns on interfaith and interreligious solidarity will be handled by CCA, peace and people's security by the WCC and the war on terror by NCC Philippines.

The group, which met in Hong Kong on 5–6 February, included Ahn Jae Woong and Tony Waworuntu (CCA), Clement John (WCC) and Carmencita Karagdag (NCCP/CCA).

Present as consultants were Victor Hsu (Church World Service) and Kim Yong Bock (Asia Pacific Graduate School for the Study of Life).

See the CCA website, www.cca.org.hk, for a report of the meeting.

Meet the New Consultant for UN/ESCAP



Carmencita P. Karagdag

Carmencita P. Karagdag has joined the CCA staff team as the home-based consultant to the CCA-UN/ESCAP joint program on 'Strengthening National HRD Capabilities in Poverty Alleviation and Conflict Management for Youth'.

Prior to this appointment, Menchie, as she is known to friends, was program secretary for Ecumenical Education and Nurture of the National Council of Churches in the Philippines. At the same time she served NCCP as consultant for international ministries and coordinator of the International Ecumenical Conference on Terrorism in a Globalised World held in Manila in September last year under the joint auspices of the World Council of Churches, CCA and NCCP.

Menchie is not new to CCA. She was youth secretary of CCA in the 1970s, during which time she developed the Rural Youth Development Program. Before joining CCA she and her family were among the thousands of victims of political repression under martial law in the Philippines. Following her four-year stint with CCA, she and her late husband, Romulo D. Peralta, who served with the Asia Alliance of YMCAs, established the Resource Centre for Philippine Concerns in HK and later, Tokyo. The two played a pioneering role in building worldwide solidarity for the human rights struggle in the Philippines and were instrumental in setting up migrant programs such as the

Printing Press for Korean Christian Federation



This meeting with leaders of the Korean Christian Federation from the Democratic People's Republic of Korea held in Beijing, China, on 4 February 2003 discussed, among other things, the setting up of a printing press for KCF. Here, giving greetings, is Rev. O Kyung U, general secretary of the central committee of the KCF (standing). Also present was Ahn Jae Woong, CCA general secretary (centre)

Mission to Filipino Migrant Workers in HK and the Migrant Women's Program In Japan. Menchie also founded the Hong Kong-based ARENA (Asian Regional Exchange for New Alternatives).

An ardent advocate of women's rights, she helped found the women's program of CCA in the 1970s and more recently the NCCP's Women's Desk and the Ecumenical Women's Forum, of which she continues to serve as convenor.

Menchie earned her bachelor's degree in political science and took an MA in Asian studies at the University of the Philippines in Manila. She was lecturer in political science at the UP and taught social sciences, history and English in other institutions. She was awarded a Virginia Cadbury fellowship at the Selly Oak College in Birmingham. She is editor of several books, including *Peace, Disarmament and Symbiosis in Asia Pacific* and *Beyond the Cold War*.

Her current ecumenical involvement includes being member of the executive and central committees as well as the search committee of the WCC. She is also vice moderator of the WCC Advisory Group on Regional Relations and Ecumenical Sharing.

She therefore brings to the joint CCA-UN/ESCAP program a wealth of experience in ecumenical and development work.

A People's Concept of Mission

Representatives of working groups on 'people's concept of mission' met in Waikkal, Sri Lanka, on 15-17 February to update each other on the progress of their respective people's rethinking of mission and to discuss theological issues and practical

matters related to a forthcoming book on the theme. The group consisted of representatives from India (Lalsangkima and Evangeline Rajkumar), Indonesia (Anna Marsiana and Budi Subanar, SJ), Korea (Lee Sang Youn), Philippines (Lisa B. Lamis and Ben Alforque, MSC) and Sri Lanka (Jeffrey Abayeselara, Jothiny Seenithamby, Adrian Aaron and Asoka Weersinghe) and M.P. Joseph, technical adviser. Each group will redraft and update their paper based on feedback from the meeting.

The book, with the proposed title of *Rerooting Mission in the People's Struggle*, will be published in India and the Philippines and in several languages later this year.

The project is an attempt to review and consolidate ecumenical thinking on mission and justice and to explore new perspectives of mission evolved through participation in people's struggles.

Obituaries

Yayori Matsui



Yayori Matsui, a journalist, feminist and ecumenical leader from Japan, passed away on 27 December. She was 68.

Since learning that she was suffering from terminal liver cancer, she devoted her time to finishing an autobiography that was to trace her life from childhood through her career as a reporter for the *Asabi* newspaper, her involvement in Asian women's issues that led first to the founding of the Asian Women's Research Centre and then to the Violence against Women in War Net-

work, Japan, and the Women's International War Crimes Tribunal. But the disease spread more quickly than had been anticipated, and the work was left unfinished.

Yayori Matsui spent her life fighting to rid the world of war and violence against women and died hoping that the Women's Museum of War and Peace would be established as soon as possible. The museum is to house materials concerning the 'comfort women' issue and sexual violence against women in armed conflicts throughout the world today, and is to serve as a centre for women who will carry on the battle against war and violence.

Eng Kim Chhoun

Eng Kim Chhoung, 52, women's secretary of the Kampuchea Christian Council, died on 15 February. Christians belonging to different congregations and some members of the Kampuchea Christian Council, joined her son, Yok Kunthea Sambo, as her remains were buried at the Christian Cemetery in Kandal Province.

A woman of compassion and integrity, she spent her life serving the church, particularly in the empowerment of women. She belonged to the Sophea Phibal Phnom Penh Church, where her son is a pastor.

Remembering Kim Chhoun's participation in the Women's Alternative Leadership for Transformation, Sharon Rose Joy Ruiz-Duremdes, General Secretary of the National Council of Churches in the Philippines, said, 'She is one of the more serious learners. She also exuded such deep spirituality. She will indeed be a big loss in the women's organisation.'



Breathing In

Oh God, we take time to pause from daily work
to gather our thoughts;
to let our bodies catch up with our souls;
to feel your presence in your creation;
to ask for forgiveness for our lapses, ours and on behalf of your people and
to be ourselves restored.

* * *

Breathing in, God's Spirit calms my body;
Breathing out, it's good to be alive.

* * *

Lord Jesus Christ, we take time to gather around you
at this beginning of Lent
by your life and teachings may we find our strength
and journeying together with you may we find our rest.

* * *

Breathing in, Christ lives in our lives
Breathing out, it's good to be alive.

* * *

Holy Spirit, creative energy of love and compassion,
life embracing, life transforming;
heal our bodies, heal our souls,
heal our relationships; heal our nations.

* * *

Breathing in, the Spirit heals
Breathing out, it's good to be alive.

—Cora Tabing-Reyes