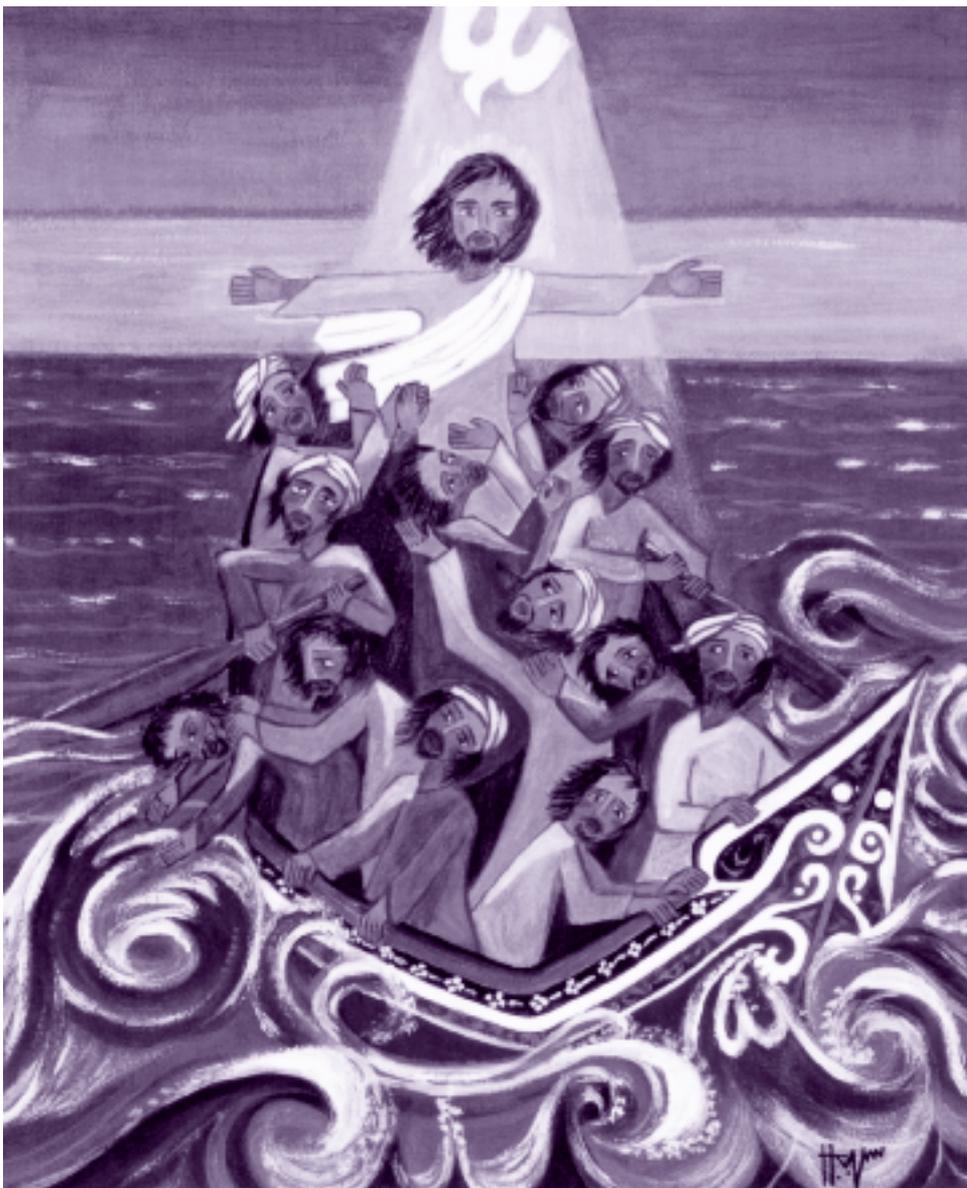




Christian Conference of Asia

cca news



Ecumenical
cooperation

DOV focus
on Asia 2005

Global
Christian
Forum

Youth and
women in
Nepal

Pax Asiana

Volume 39 • Number 2 • June 2004

Ecumenical cooperation



Cover illustration: 'Peace Be Still' by Hanna Cheriyan Varghese, Malaysia (courtesy 'Christ for All People', Asian Christian Art Association)

The time has come for the churches in Asia to work for a people-initiated and people-oriented Asian people's 'Pax Asiana'

Ecumenical cooperation has been an important part of CCA's life. This issue of *CCA News* has stimulating stories about it. CCA has always worked closely with the World Council of Churches (WCC). We have yet another opportunity to work together with the WCC on the Decade to Overcome Violence program, which will focus on Asia in 2005. People concerned with the program have met a few times to reflect, plan and implement the DOV focus on Asia in 2005 programs and events, and have come out with great ideas that are practical and useful.

'Global Christian Forum', the WCC-initiated Asian consultation in Hong Kong, was an occasion for sharing ecumenical table with Christians from different traditions and backgrounds. The WCC-CCA Liaison Group Meeting in Chiang Mai, held in conjunction with the CCA Executive Committee meeting, at the end of May provided space for reflecting on common ecumenical commitments and mutual cooperation.

The stories on interfaith consultation on gender justice, people's forum on peace for life and searching for an Asian face of Christ appearing in this issue are ecumenical ventures and concerns for many years to come.

This issue also has an interesting story on youth and women in Nepal, where two of our CCA executive secretaries conducted programs in association with the churches there. Although Nepal is not yet a member of the CCA we have been cooperating with them in many areas, especially in ecumenical leadership formation. CCA is committed to encourage and support the church in Nepal, and to develop the church infrastructure and leadership in this Hindu nation. The Kampuchea Christian Council is another example of CCA's commitment to nurture and develop churches in their local context.

Asia Sunday was observed in many places in Asia and outside, including at the Ecumenical Centre in Geneva, on the theme 'Serving together beyond boundaries'. There are two reflections in this issue on the Asia Sunday theme.

Another article that makes interesting reading is 'Networking in mission' by Lee Hong Jung. Mission has always been high on CCA's agenda and will continue to be so. The writer has given food for thought for further reflection on this subject.

As I said in my report to the 4-6 June CCA Executive Committee meeting in Chiang Mai, the time has come for the churches in Asia to work for a people-initiated and people-oriented Asian people's 'Pax Asiana'. The gathering of people's wisdom, traditions, customs and experiences in Asia is an important part in working towards a people's Pax Asiana. The Buddhists' way of Sangha, a spiritual community, where all members share their understanding of life and stability of community, sorrows and joys, and where all connect with each other could be an ideal stage of people's Pax Asiana in the future.

—Abn Jae Woong

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Call for a 'Pax Asiana'

CCA executive committee meets in Chiang Mai

Dr Ahn Jae Woong, general secretary of the Christian Conference of Asia, has called on the Asian churches and all peace-loving people to work towards the goal of an 'Asian people's Pax Asiana'.

In doing so he urged for the expansion of the concept of people-initiated peace making and people-oriented peace building to a people-initiated and a people-oriented Pax Asiana, a task for all those who live in the 21st century in Asia, which according to him has a rich tradition of respect for life and the search for a communitarian and egalitarian life.

Presenting a report to the CCA Executive Committee held in Chiang Mai, Thailand, from 4 to 6 June, Ahn Jae Woong noted that the state-sponsored Pax Romana, Pax Britannica and Pax Americana were false and all had failed in history.

'We have to gather all Asian people's wisdom, traditions, customs and experiences for building a people's Pax Asiana in our times,' he said.

He suggested the Buddhists' way of Sangha as an option for building Pax Asiana. He termed the Sangha as a spiritual community where all members shared their understand-



Ahn Jae Woong presents his report. Jennifer Dawson, CCA president on the right

ing of life and stability of community, shared their sorrows and joys and all were connected with each other.

'The Buddhist way of Sangha could be an ideal stage of people's Pax Asiana in the future,' he added.

He urged churches to declare the People's Pax Asiana as the catchwords on the occasion of the forthcoming 12th General

Assembly of the CCA, which will focus on the theme 'Building communities of peace for all'.

The general secretary told the meeting that the struggle against racism, militarism, classism, sexism, discrimination and domination should be the constant tasks of all peace-loving people for building peace in society.



CCA executive committee and staff members meeting in Chiang Mai



The Lotus Hotel in Chiang Mai, Thailand, the venue for the CCA executive committee meeting, and the site for CCA's 12th General Assembly in 2005

He explained peace is not only the absence of conflict but also included 'righteousness or wholeness'. In addition it meant liberation and salvation.

He termed killings and maimings of innocent people, torture and human rights abuses as acts contrary to justice and liberation.

On the question of war, he noted that it could never be the ultimate means for achieving peace and justice.

He explained that the awareness of violence, non-violence and the struggle for justice as part of the 'peace on earth' concept

based on biblical teachings.

'Without resolving the tension, hatred and hostilities in human hearts, any attempt for peace making effort is questionable,' he said.

He raised six questions for Asian churches to consider:

- What can CCA offer as true virtues for the ecumenical movement?
- How can CCA establish a genuine people's Pax Asiana?
- How can CCA support the aspirations of the poor and the marginalised people in Asia?

- When can CCA become financially self-reliant and build resources in Asia?
- Where can CCA pursue its ideals in Asia?
- Who can CCA cooperate with as partners?

The ten-page general secretary's report included highlights of CCA programs since October 2003 and plans for the coming months in 2004.

The main focus of the executive committee was on the preparations for the 12th general assembly, to be held in Chiang Mai, Thailand, from 31 March to 6 April 2005.

The main speakers at the assembly will be Dr Sam Kobia, Professor James Haire and Dr Christine Loh.

The executive committee also heard a finance report presented by Dr Prawate Khid-arn, associate general secretary for finance.

Earlier, Dr Boonthong Poonchareon, president of the Payap University in Chiang Mai and chair of the Local Host Committee for the CCA's 12th General Assembly, addressed the meeting. On behalf of the local organisers, he extended all support and co-operation for the major CCA event.

One of the highlights of the meeting was two Bible studies by Dr Anna May Chain, an Old Testament Scholar from Myanmar.

The executive committee members attended the Sunday morning service at the Chiang Mai First Church of the Church of Christ in Thailand. One of CCA's presidents, Joseph Mar Irenaeus Suffragan Metropolitan of the Mar Thoma Church, delivered the sermon.

—Philip Mathew



(left) Boonthong Poonchaveon, president of Payap University, addressing the meeting, with Joseph Mar Irenaus, CCA president, on his right. (right) Prawate Khid-arn presenting the financial report

A challenge to the churches

DOV to focus on Asia in 2005

The Decade to Overcome Violence (DOV) will focus on Asia in 2005. The theme for Asia focus will be the same as of the next year's CCA General Assembly, 'Building communities of peace for all'.

Four meetings to plan the program have already taken place in Hong Kong.

A CCA-WCC joint meeting held on 22 April was attended by CCA and WCC staff, a WCC officer and the DOV Reference Group members in Asia. Speaking on the occasion, Hansulrich Gerber, WCC coordinator for DOV, said that it challenged the churches to walk with those who are oppressed by violence and to act in solidarity with those who are struggling for justice, peace and integrity of creation.

CCA executive secretary Hope Antone presented a summary of the earlier meetings held to discuss the DOV focus on Asia in 2005.

She reported that taking into consideration the vastness of Asia and its diversities and the different forms of violence that occur in the region, the expanded meeting of the CCA staff and ecumenical friends on 8 April have identified different root causes of violence. They were: geopolitics, economic globalization and cultural domination, religious fundamentalism, ethnic conflicts, poverty and unemployment/underemployment, structural violence through wrong government policies, militarization, culture of violence, discrimination, racism, inequality, gender injustice, colonial/cold-war legacy, ecological violence, and subtle forms of violence like mental and psychological through education and textbooks. Among the plans evolved by CCA for DOV 2005 were:

- a survey, through a questionnaire, of what the Asian churches have done so far,
- a brochure on DOV in Asia,
- publications on DOV in Asia,
- reflections on DOV to be published in *CCA News*,

- a focus on a different Asian country every month in 2005,
- Asia Sunday 2005 to highlight stories on overcoming violence,
- the collection of songs, prayers, and paintings on the theme,
- a program for children to express their experience of violence and their vision of peace building through art forms,
- building a network on peace to include not only ecumenical, but also civil society and other religious groups.

The Decade to Overcome Violence (2001–2010): Churches Seeking Reconciliation and Peace was initiated at the WCC assembly held in Harare, Zimbabwe, in 1999. According to the WCC, DOV, a global movement, calls churches, ecumenical organisations and all people of goodwill to:

- work together for peace, justice and reconciliation at all levels—local, regional, and global,
- embrace creative approaches to peace building which are consonant with the spirit of the gospel,
- interact and collaborate with local communities, secular movements, and people of other living faiths towards cultivating a culture of peace,

- walk with people who are systematically oppressed by violence, and to act in solidarity with all struggling for justice, peace and the integrity of creation,
- repent together for our complicity in violence, and to engage in theological reflection to overcome the spirit, logic, and practice of violence.

Among the objectives of DOV are the strengthening of existing peace networks and creating new ones.

The focus of DOV in 2002 was the Middle East. In 2003, it focused on Sudan. This year's focus has been on the USA.

Speaking at the CCA-WCC joint meeting, Kang Moon Kyu stressed the need for widening the platform of DOV to include secular groups and NGOs involved in the peace movement. Mathews George Chunakara paid tributes to CCA for keeping DOV a priority agenda. He noted that CCA launched DOV as early as 2000 before the general assembly in Tomohon.

Hope Antone will be the contact person for matters relating to the DOV focus on Asia in 2005. CCA will also appoint an intern for one year to implement the DOV-related programs in Asia.

—Philip Mathew



Participants at the CCA-WCC joint meeting on the DOV focus in Asia 2005: (front) Carmencita Karagdag, Philip Mathew, Hansulrich Gerber, Wong Wai Ching, Kang Moon Kyu, Mathews George Chunakara, Augusto Lawig, Corazon Tabing-Reyes, (back) Judo Poerwowidagdo, Prawate Khid-arn, Tony Waroruntu, Hope Antone

Working together

CCA and WCC foresee closer joint implementation

An annual CCA–WCC Liaison Group Meeting was held from 30 May to 1 June 2004 in Chiang Mai, Thailand. Both partners expressed satisfaction and appreciation for all the good things that happened in 2003 and laid down joint planning and implementation for the years to come.

His Grace Zacharias Mar Theophilus at the inaugural session welcomed participants and hoped this annual meeting would further strengthen the commitment of both organisations to serve God and people in these changing and challenging times.

Since the last meeting in Indonesia in June 2003 many joint programs had been implemented and others are planned, including the CCA 12th General Assembly in 2005 and the WCC General Assembly in 2006.

In promoting Christian unity and providing a space where Christians from different traditions can come together for dialogue and cooperation, the meeting was excited to receive a report, presented by Mr Hubert van Beek, on the 'Global Christian Forum: Asia Consultation', which was held in Hong Kong (30 April – 4 May 2004). The forum affirmed the need for an emphasis on holiness of life and prayer for the fostering of unity amongst different Christian groups and traditions and a strengthening of the church's participation

in God's mission in the world. It also affirmed the need to explore together models for working, studying and addressing issues that are of common concern, notably poverty, oppression and religious intolerance. The forum urged the Evangelical Fellowship of Asia (EFA), the Christian Conference of Asia (CCA) and the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conference (FABC) to assist in forwarding this initiative. The liaison group recommended that the CCA-FABC-EFA joint Asian leaders meeting be held in 2006.

In the midst of conflicts and animosity, the liaison group agreed on the special roadmap for the Decade to Overcome Violence on Asia in 2005. 'Today, we live in an age full of contradictions. Killings of innocent people in the war zones, kidnappings, torture and human rights abuses are becoming very common in different parts of the world. How do we live as good neighbours? What is the role of religions in this context? We have to search for common solutions for the common future of humanity,' Dr Ahn Jae Woong, CCA General Secretary, emphasised in his report. The campaign will come under the same umbrella as the theme of the CCA 12th General Assembly, 'Building Communities of Peace for All', and will be actively implemented by CCA program areas. The commencement of DOV focus on Asia 2005

will be marked by a special session during the NCC general secretaries meeting in Chiang Mai in September 2004. The launch of national and regional campaigns will follow. The aim of the campaign is to raise the awareness of churches and communities in seeking peace and reconciliation.

Among other significant concerns was the situation of the church and people in Timor Lorosa'e (East Timor). The people in the country still suffer and struggle in their daily life. The church needs support in leadership and human resource development, in program planning and implementation. This raised concern as to how and in what ways CCA and the WCC could assist churches in Timor Lorosa'e to be able to effectively do their ministries. It was finally agreed that a small pastoral visiting team will be sent.

Last but not least, the meeting took the opportunity to express appreciation to Hubert van Beek, who retires in July 2004, after serving the WCC for the last 26 years. A farewell dinner party was organised on 1 June 2004.

Ahn Jae Woong, on behalf of the participants, paid tribute and said that Mr van Beek is an example in the ecumenical movement with his outstanding commitment, hard work, sincerity and integrity.

—Prawate Khid-arn



(Left) Participants at the CCA-WCC Liaison Group Meeting, 2004 (Right) Ahn Jae Woong thanks Hubert Van Beek for his long commitment to the ecumenical movement. He was presented with a plaque

People's Forum on Peace for Life

First forum to be held in November

The following statement was issued by the continuing committee of the People's Forum on Peace for Life, following their recent meeting in Geneva

We, the continuing committee of the People's Forum on Peace for Life, made up of representatives of the World Council of Churches, the Christian Conference of Asia, the National Council of Churches in the Philippines and the interim secretariat, met in Geneva on 16 May to review how far we have gone and to plot out the next steps we have to take.

The meeting was an occasion to renew our commitments to the process of building a movement that will express in concrete actions our common resistance against the perils of economic globalisation, state terrorism and increased militarisation.

During our conference in Manila in September 2002, the body gave a mandate to facilitate the formation of the People's Forum on Peace for Life. Since then we have continued our communication and, in October 2003 in Seoul, convened an international workshop with other conference participants to launch the process of setting up our network.

As we agreed on during the workshop, a plan is now under way to hold the first forum of Peace for Life in November 2004. The interim secretariat that we have set up is now laying the groundwork that hopefully will bring our solidarities to another stage of organised effort.

We have reached consensus on several points that are important at this stage of our formation.

We would like to share these with you for your comment and input.

Global perspective

People's Forum on Peace for Life was conceived as a contribution to the Decade to Overcome Violence, a global process facilitated by the World Council of Churches aimed at linking and consolidating various initiatives to build a culture of peace across the globe. The Peace for Life initiative exists within the overarching framework of this global process and aims to contribute to it by promoting the perspective that the cause of the biggest violence that has victimised, and continues to victimise, the greatest number is the system that feeds the greed and arrogance of a privileged few. Thus, overcoming violence requires confronting and challenging global hegemony, which perpetuates and utilises the spirit, logic and practice of violence to pursue its objectives.

Since its inception, the People's Forum on Peace for Life has had a global perspective with an Asian focus. Given the commonality and interconnectedness of the problems faced by the world's poor non-industrialised countries, the majority of whose populations are among the biggest victims of violence, the forum has come to be defined as a truly global movement focused on South–South solidarity within an interfaith and multicultural framework. The importance of a concerted effort on issues of common interest to Asia, Latin America and Africa, along with concerned people in Europe and North America, can not only provide a louder voice with a much greater force but is also an imperative if we are to succeed in our objectives. A global problem requires a global response.

First people's forum

The formal founding of our network will be an occasion for us to forge commitments towards realising the vision of establishing the People's Forum on Peace for Life as a site where people grounded in the churches and social movements converge, gather strength and build on the transformative power of the faith to pursue the task of resisting global hegemony.

Specifically, we hope to:

- engage in faith–life reflections on and arrive at a common understanding of current geopolitical issues as well as emergent concerns related to globalisation, war, peace and security,
- define the tasks of the People's Forum on Peace for Life based on an assessment of the gains and challenges facing the global peace movement and ecumenical and interfaith peace initiatives,
- formally launch the People's Forum on Peace for Life and confirm the basis of unity on the principles defining its role, character, vision and aims,
- draw up a common set of objectives and program of action that will guide the work of the group in the next five years.

We have tentatively scheduled our first forum for the last week of November 2004. We are initially considering Indonesia as the site of the gathering. We will be approaching churches in the country to explore possibilities of hosting the activity. By the end of June, we hope to reach consensus on the dates and venue for the public launching of our network.

Our understanding of peace for life

The People's Forum on Peace for Life operates in the context of the global peace and justice front. In particular, it finds itself in the junction between:

- the long history of peace initiatives being undertaken by church communities, ecumenical organisations and interfaith alliances worldwide addressing a whole range of issues constituting threats to life—human rights violations, violence against women, internal conflicts, environmental destruction, religious fundamentalism, and so on,
- the multifaceted protest against war and state terrorism, which has reached a global popular character in response to the US-led 'war on terror' and the growing social justice movement in resistance against political and cultural hegemony and corporate-led globalisation.

Within this environment, Peace for Life claims the particular role of mobilising the resources of the faith—internally within the ecumenical movement and as an outcome of interfaith solidarity—in the struggle for peace and social justice and against global hegemony.

The People's Forum on Peace for Life defines itself as:

- a people-centred global solidarity network of peace advocates rooted in the churches, church-related institutions, ecumenical organisations, faith communities, civil society and social movements who are engaged in various forms of resistance against war and corporate-led globalisation [constituency],
- a movement committed to a multifaith approach, interfaith and South-to-South solidarity, and progressive ecumenical discourse and response to the whole question of peace, justice and security [basis of unity],
- a space and centre for networking, information exchange, common action, and programs and projects organised by network members [function].

The forum's mission aims to bring faith-based resistance to the global struggle against global hegemony, manifested in multilateral and state apparatuses, by raising the aware-

People's Forum on Peace for Life: program objectives

- **Examining our faith amid the threat of empire**—Foster an understanding of and commitment to the faith imperatives within the churches and the ecumenical community of challenging the emergence of the US Empire.
- **Building resistance against globalisation and militarisation**—Help build and mobilise within the ecumenical movement and in solidarity with other faith groups a critical mass that would promote and mobilise the transformative power of a faith-based resistance against increasing militarisation, globalisation, and hegemonic control of world resources.
- **Seeking and living out new alternatives**—Engage the ecumenical community in a process of articulating, shaping, celebrating and living out alternative visions of peace for life.
- **Equipping ourselves for the task of peace movement building**—Develop and establish the organisational and programmatic capacity of People's Forum on Peace for Life in order that it may play a leading role in mobilising the transformative power of the faith for the struggle against global hegemony.

ness of the ecumenical constituency on the evils of war and globalisation along with the imperatives of peace and justice, consolidating their response into an organised global effort, and cultivating and promoting peaceful coexistence within communities of varying religions and ethnicities.

Specifically, Peace for Life will:

- engage churches and the ecumenical community in a continuing process of study and reflection on the faith impera-

tives of resisting global hegemony,

- challenge the churches and ecumenical institutions to take concrete actions to resist attempts of powers and principalities to establish hegemonic control,
- reach out to people and communities of other faiths towards standing on a common ground for peace,
- promote and live out a culture of peace and alternative visions of peace for life.

The continuation committee and the secretariat

During our meeting in Geneva, we affirmed the role of the Continuation Committee, as presently constituted, in ensuring that the hopes and mandate of both the Seoul workshop and the Manila conference are realised. We agreed that the Continuation Committee would continue to provide leadership to the new global initiative and serve as the body responsible for policy matters until decisions on a new organisational structure are firmed up in the November forum that will officially found the People's Forum on Peace for Life. We also affirmed the decision of the Seoul workshop to establish the interim secretariat in Manila under the hosting of the National Council of Churches in the Philippines, subject to review in the upcoming forum in November.

We will keep you posted on developments with regards to the plans that we have laid out. We thank those of you who have taken time out from your busy schedules to share with us your views and suggestions, which have been especially helpful in developing the program concept for the People's Forum on Peace for Life. We remain committed to the mandate that you have given us, and we look forward to fruitful engagements with you as we go about our work. We close this report with the prayer that the Manila Covenant, the fundamental basis of our coming together, will continue to guide our solidarities in the months and years ahead.

The Continuation Committee, People's Forum on Peace for Life, 26 May 2004
Clement John (WCC), Tony Waworuntu (CCA), Sharon Rose Joy Ruiz-Duremdes (NCCP), Carmencita P. Karagdag (People's Forum on Peace for Life)

Promoting positive health

CCA-UN/ESCAP hold joint consultation

CCA and UN/ESCAP convened a consultation on 'Life Skills Development and Planning for Health Promotion' on 29–31 March at the United Nations Conference Centre in Bangkok. Attended by 16 representatives from national counterpart organisations or NCOs in four target countries, the consultation drew the direct involvement of stakeholders in the development of a new project profile for a five-year joint CCA-UN/ESCAP training program for youth. The full participation of project beneficiaries in the formulation of the project concept and initial planning is recognised as essential in enhancing the sense of ownership by the stakeholders themselves.

The main output of the consultation was a new project profile with log frame, titled 'Strengthening Life Skills, Promoting Positive Health Behaviour among Youth', which aims to reduce the threat to health of HIV/AIDS, drugs and violence among disadvantaged youth. It also hopes to result in a more effective planning of programs by government and civil-society organisations for achieving health promotion, especially to address HIV/AIDS issues.

The new project will focus on life-skills training, seen as an effective tool to empower young people to make informed and responsible decisions about their own wellbeing. It includes specific problem-solving skills such as tackling peer pressure on drug use and negotiation for safe sex. According to the draft project profile, life skills education is recognised as a long-term strategy for reducing individual vulnerability to health and social risks by addressing the gap between knowledge, attitude and practice. In her orientation on life skills given on the first day of the consultation, Ms Cai Cai, Social Affairs Officer of the Health and Development Section, referred to the so-called 'ten generic life skills', as defined by WHO: self-awareness, empathy, critical thinking, crea-

tive thinking, interpersonal relationships, effective communication, managing emotion, managing stress, decision-making and problem solving.

The new project, which is expected to be implemented beginning November 2004, builds on the gains of the recently concluded joint project, 'Strengthening National HRD

Capabilities in Poverty Alleviation and Conflict Negotiation Skills among Youth', which was aimed primarily to strengthen the capacity of youth officers and trainers (both governmental and non-governmental) to address the needs of youth facing conflicts and to promote youth projects to reduce poverty and mitigate conflict.

Participants from NCOs, mostly government ministries on youth and sports affairs, social welfare agencies and youth federations from Cambodia, Sri Lanka, the Philippines and the Xinjian Uygur Autonomous Region of China gave interesting country-team presentations on a situation analysis of their respective countries/regions on health risks that youth face. The reports generated a wealth of information necessary for enriching the project profile and filling up the logical framework. Briefings and orientation on logical framework, a planning matrix contained in a one-page summary of the project strategy, including objectives, indicators, means of verification and assumptions (risks), was provided by Bernhard Barth, Social Affairs Officer also of the Health and Development Section.

CCA consultant and UN/ESCAP non reimbursable loan expert, Carmencita P. Karagdag, who completed her term with the termination of the previous project, introduced a brief document on 'CCA's Enduring Ecumenical Values'. In her introduction, she called on the participants to put greater attention on education for social change and the need for life-skills training to contribute not only to personal improvement and wellbeing, but also to positive community or social change. Meanwhile Dr Lee Hong Jung, CCA executive secretary, gave a brief but thought-provoking opening reflection. In her welcome speech that officially opened the meeting, Thelma Kay, chief of the Emerging Social Issues Division, recalled the long history of cooperation between CCA and UN/ESCAP.

Our prayer

Make us keep the sputtering
lantern burning
and not to break a wounded reed
Make us understand
the secret of eternal life
from the movement of a warm
heart

Make us not discriminate
the rich from the poor
the high and the low
the learned and the ignorant
those we know well and those we
do not know.

Oh!

A human life can't be exchanged
for the whole world
this supreme task of keeping the
lives
of the sons and daughters of God
Let us realise how lovely it is
to feel the burdens of
responsibility.

—by a worker of Peace Market,
Korea, from 'Your Will Be Done',
published by CCA Youth

Our journey with Jesus Christ in Asia

A statement from the Global Christian Forum Asia Consultation

Around sixty Christians from a broad range of traditions and organizations—including Anglican, Catholic, Evangelical, Mar Thoma, Orthodox, Pentecostal, Protestant, Salvation Army, the Christian Conference of Asia, the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences and World Vision—came together in Hong Kong for the purpose of reflecting on our journey together with Jesus Christ in Asia.

This coming together was the initiative of the Global Christian Forum process. It provided space for us as Asian Christians from different traditions to meet with each other and to listen to each one's 'faith journey', our particular struggles and challenges in different situations in Asia, with all its plurality. We experienced a fresh sense of unity under

the lordship of Jesus Christ, and a shared passion for participating in his mission in the world.

Arising out of this sharing we developed a new awareness of one another's existence and spirituality, and with it the importance of each other in being church in Asia. We affirm that we need to build bridges that would facilitate cooperation in order to have a united voice in confronting the various issues facing Asia.

We acknowledge that this in no way means that we would lose our individual identity or distinctiveness. We acknowledge the need to respect and uphold this diversity among those who confess that God is Father, Son and Holy Spirit and Jesus Christ as perfect in his divinity and humanity. In this

spirit we need to establish trust, openness, honesty, love and humility as we work with another. We affirm the need for an emphasis on holiness of life and prayer for the fostering the unity amongst us, and a deepening and strengthening our participation in God's mission in his world. We commit ourselves to explore together models for working, studying and addressing issues that are of common concern, notably poverty, oppression and religious intolerance.

We further affirm the need to work together and continue this initiative at the regional, national and local level. We urge the Christian Conference of Asia, the Evangelical Fellowship of Asia and the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences to assist in forwarding this initiative.



Rev. Willem T.P. Simarmata from the Batak Protestant Christian Church in Indonesia speaking at the forum

Sharing with youth and women in Nepal

183 youth leaders and church workers gather in Dharan for a church youth leaders capacity building training program

In the wake of strikes and tightened security in Nepal, should the Church Youth Leaders Capacity Building Training Program be pushed through? Already the program had been postponed from February.

The National Council of Churches in Nepal and the Dharan Christian Society decided to go ahead with their plan to organise the YLCB program. To their great surprise, a total of 183 youth leaders and church workers turned up for the program, held in Dharan, eastern Nepal, on 28–31 March. Due to the unstable political situation in the country they had expected to gather only between 50 to 100. It was touching to hear stories of how some of the delegations had to walk for five or six days to get to the nearest bus stop and then travel on to Dharan for a few more days. Many experienced prolonged or doubled travel time due to so many checkpoints on the way.

Corazon Tabing-Reyes, CCA joint executive secretary for Ecumenical Formation, Gender Justice and Youth Empowerment (EGY) and Hope S. Antone, joint executive secretary for Faith, Mission and Unity (FMU) were among the resource persons of the program. Both



NCCI staff members Dinesh Suna and Rajesh Jadhav with the choir

are members of the Ecumenical Enablers Team in Asia (EETA), a joint program of CCA and the World Council of Churches Asia Desk. EETA has identified NCCN as one of the youngest NCCs in Asia and among those that need much support.

The National Council of Churches in India (NCCI) also sent two of its staff, Dinesh Suna (youth secretary) and Rajesh Jadhav (staff

of URM) as resource persons. Dinesh made a presentation on the impact of globalisation on young people while Rajesh shared on issues of ecology.

Dr K.B. Rokaya, general secretary of NCCN, led sessions on gospel and culture, and Christian and society—to challenge the young people to be like salt and light—immersing in Nepali culture and society in or-



der to increase its taste for life. Cora gave an input on leadership for transformation, with emphasis on the need for gender justice and partnership of women and men. She described gender injustice as the result of one gender exercising *power over* others, claiming the place of privilege and domination while suppressing or oppressing others. Gender justice therefore is the result of the struggle to share *power with* others, the kind that is collective and enabling for all.

I shared on the biblical bases of the wider ecumenism. With an aim of bridging the unfortunate gap between being evangelical and being ecumenical, I described this dichotomy/rift between ecumenism and evangelicalism as a sad development in the life and history of the churches but which is human-made and against the will of God for unity.

I also emphasised the need for wider ecumenism that reconciles one's evangelical faith with deep ecumenical commitment. In describing the wider ecumenism, I called for shifts from *competition to cooperation* among Christian denominations, from *condemnation to dialogue* with other faiths/religions, from *isolation to collaboration* with civil society and people's movements working for peace and justice, from *disintegration to integrity* of the whole creation.

There was a good gender and geographical representation in the gathering. A very active youth choir animated the program. As a form of service to the wider community, blood donation was an activity in the program, facilitated by staff of the National Red Cross Organisation.

Cora and I were also resource persons at the Women Leaders' Capacity Building Training on 2 April in Kathmandu. The meeting was co-hosted by NCCN and the Young Women's Christian Association, led by Drupadi Rokaya, and attended by 38 women. Cora shared on the history of women's involvement in the ecumenical movement, highlighting such bodies as WCC, CCA, ACWC, and the related programs of the World Day of Prayer and the Fellowship of the Least Coin.

I shared on Asian feminism and the task of feminist theologising (including re-reading the Bible with feminist lenses)—giving them a framework of how it is done in order



NCCN general secretary Dr K.B. Rokaya is surrounded by youth workers after a session

to help bring about transformation in the lives of Asian women. A number of the women expressed the need for a longer meeting next time, especially for more workshops on reading the Bible through Asian eyes.

Going to Nepal and experiencing some of the unstable political situation there reminded me of life in the Philippines under the Marcos dictatorship. Surprisingly, our connecting flight from Bangkok to Kathmandu was full of tourists with their backpacks and trekking gear. Indeed, Nepal's beautiful

mountains continue to attract tourists year in and year out. The tense political situation became so real for me as we were halted at various checkpoints and when we had to walk for 40 minutes on the way to the airport on 3 April, due to a strike waged by a number of political parties. At the time writing, the political turmoil has still not abated. I continue to receive emails from friends in Nepal with requests for prayers for peace in their country.

—Hope S. Antone



Resting after donating blood

Changing the world

Interfaith consultation on gender justice

Wongsanit Ashram, in Nakhon Nayok, Thailand—a Buddhist intentional community for simple living, engaging in social action and spiritual practice, which is about an hour outside of Bangkok (depending on the traffic)—was a perfect place for the ‘inter-religious consultation on gender justice and genuine partnership of men and women’.

A group of 24 women and six men—representing Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism and Islam—gathered in the ashram as participants/resource persons on 14–19 May. We came from eight countries—India, Pakistan, Laos, Burma, Cambodia, Thailand, the Philippines and Indonesia. Among us were two Buddhist monks, two Buddhist nuns, a Catholic nun, teachers, ecumenical and church workers, activists and workers with grassroots and NGOs.

The consultation was a follow-up to an earlier consultation on inter-religious cooperation in April 2003. It was planned in response to a recommendation from the April

consultation that in order to live our faiths in community—seeking justice and peace—there is a need to ‘examine the patriarchal theologies, structures and practices of our religions and cultures in order to empower women by developing alternative educational resources for the promotion of equal partnership between women and men’.

Getting to the ashram across a canal on a wooden raft (that one has to pull using a rope hung overhead from bank to bank) enabled us to reflect on the kinds of baggage we carry—and whether they are necessary—to get to the ‘other side’ of life, where hopefully there would be more justice for all.

‘You cannot change the world if you cannot even wash your own dishes,’ was one motto of the ashram. So participants washed their own utensils after meals and cleaned their own cottages.

The consultation began with personal storytelling—a sharing about one’s self and the web of relationships that shape who we are. For while we are born either male or female,

we get caught in the social constructions of gender or what it means to be masculine or feminine. Each one’s family, culture, class and faith contribute to the shaping of the self. As we heard our personal stories, we saw how each mirrored the other in many ways—the burdens of gender injustice and the continuing struggle to break the cycle of oppression.

We also had a session of national storytelling, during which many stories were heard, told from different social locations. Weaving through the stories were some common threads:

- That we are all influenced or shaped by and socialised into a patriarchal mindset, behaviour and way of life in the family, culture, religion and society.
- Patriarchy makes us think in hierarchy that puts the male at the top, privileged or superior position.
- Patriarchy makes us think in dualism that puts one side (all those associated with the male) in a positive light and the other (all those associated with the female) in a negative light.
- Patriarchy has been so ingrained in our lives that we often do not question it any more—we think it is simply the normal or natural way.
- The socioeconomic and political systems of our Asian societies also reflect patriarchy. Globalisation, being the new form of colonisation, has led to further objectification and commodification of our Asian cultures, natural resources, women and children.
- Although our religions speak of equality of women and men, they also reflect patriarchal teachings and practices that inscribe or reinscribe the domination of certain groups and the oppression of others. All our religions are after all patriarchal—the founders, keepers and interpreters are also men.



Interfaith group discussion (photo: Totok Budi Santoso)

We therefore recognised patriarchy, which is embedded in our cultures and religions, as the root cause of the issues that we confront now and which manifests itself in:

- prohibition of women from access to power and decision making in social life and structures,
- relegation of women in the domestic sphere, which undermines women's full realisation of their potential,
- misinterpretation of sacred texts and traditions to perpetuate the marginalisation and violation of women,
- justification of traditions and practices that are oppressive to women to maintain the interests of the powerful and the rich, represented by elite men in communities,
- ignorance, which has kept Asians in the dark of oppression and hindered them from realising their full human potential,
- globalisation and its evil effects, which have kept the majority of Asians in the depth of poverty and exploitation.

Surprisingly, as Asians, steeped in a plurality of spirituality and religiosity, we hold on to our various faiths, and seek their liberating aspects for both women and men, even as we critique or question their oppressive aspects.

Hence, the consultation included panel sharing by representatives (a man and a woman) of each faith community sharing attempts at reinterpreting some religious texts and deconstructing traditions and practices

that have been oppressive to women. We realise how such voices are still few—especially when for some of us, the religious texts are not even easily accessible—and that we therefore need to do more in this area.

In a workshop session, we tried to envision alternative Asian communities where:

- women and men are treated equally as full human beings,
- men and women are equal partners in decision making in all spheres of human life—in the economic, social, political, religious and domestic spheres,
- the marginalised and the oppressed are liberated and empowered.

We positively acknowledge the liberating themes and efforts that are emerging around Asia:

- Building of inclusive communities that
 - promote interrelatedness, mindfulness and loving kindness among all created beings,
 - support women's participation in all areas of life and genuine partnership with men,
 - encourage the voiceless to speak towards genuine dialogue,
 - critique practices and traditions that negate the dignity of human beings.
- Women's attempts at reading and interpreting sacred texts in context and recover its liberating, empowering and transforming themes

As our commitment to addressing the problem of gender injustice in Asia, we clustered and prioritised the following issues and



National storytelling from India by Hindu and Christian participants

brainstormed on possible strategies, which include the following:

- Violence against women—awareness building, outreach and service to victims, advocacy and mobilization.
- Gender participation—advocacy for equal participation in policy and decision making, legislation and implementation.
- Gender justice in religious education—interfaith critique of education materials, development of interfaith curriculums that promote a culture of peace, and re-reading of religious texts.
- Globalisation and consumerism—contemplative retreat to reclaim women's spirit, promotion of value-based products and fair markets in religious establishments and communities, training in sustainable economy and fair market analysis and feminist religious perspective.
- Giving blessings in Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist and Christian ways, and bonding ourselves in commitment to start transforming ourselves and our faith communities to help build our envisioned Asian communities.

—Hope S. Antone



Group discussion (photo: Totok Budi Santoso)

Prayer and action in Japan

Churches oppose the compulsory use of the Hinomaru (Japanese national flag) and the Kimigayo (Japanese national anthem)

At the Executive General Committee meeting of the 35th General Assembly on 27 May 2004, the National Christian Council in Japan adopted a position to oppose the compulsory use of the Hinomaru and the Kimigayo and called upon its member churches and organisations to take up this challenge together. Their statement follows:

What is happening

After the national anthem and flag law was put forth in August 1999, in October 2003 the Tokyo Metropolitan Board of Education issued protocols for the Hinomaru and the Kimigayo at public school ceremonies. In April 2004 it punished teachers who refused to sing and play the piano for the Kimigayo at the graduation ceremony of public schools in Tokyo. It even punished teachers whose students did not stand up to sing the Kimigayo.

These acts of the Tokyo Metropolitan Government contradict the word of former Prime Minister Keizo Obuchi who stated that the national anthem and flag law would not be carried out by force. They are violating freedom of thought and freedom of conscience (Article 19) and the freedom of religion (Article 20) as guaranteed in the constitution. They are also violating Article 14—freedom of thought, conscience and religion—of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which was adopted in 1989 and ratified by Japan in 1994. In an environment like this, we cannot expect that there will be respect for the uniqueness of each child at school, which is essential for the growth of children. Punishment of teachers is oppressive and affects children, who are developing their own ideas about the anthem and flag.

Japan has again become a military superpower. The Japanese government has continuously damaged the constitution, which embraces the aspiration for peace. It has dispatched troops to Iraq, the Prime Minister goes to worship at the Yasukuni shrine as one of his public functions, and the Hinomaru and the Kimigayo are made compulsory at public schools. We, Japanese Christians, as well as

Japanese citizens of other faiths working for peace, have a great anxiety over this situation. We note that among those who were punished for refusing the Hinomaru and the Kimigayo are teachers whose struggle is based on their Christian faith. We also note that there are children who are struggling to keep their faith despite huge pressures. We Christians recognise the challenges they are facing as our own.

*We have been
seeking to live
the gospel of
reconciliation
with sisters and
brothers of Asian
countries*

We act upon reflections of our past deeds

The Hinomaru and the Kimigayo were symbols of imperial militarism, which committed aggressive wars, based on State Shinto. We Japanese invaded neighbouring countries and killed innocent citizens while singing the Kimigayo anthem under the Hinomaru

flag. We Japanese Christians were forced to acknowledge the emperor above God, and we accepted to worship the emperor at the Shinto shrines. By doing so, we took part in oppressing the peoples of Korea and other Asian and Pacific countries. We will never forget this history. We will keep the fact deep in our heart that we could not keep our faith in Christ who had been crucified on the cross, the only God, and that it resulted in the atrocious killing of our neighbours.

After the World War II, many member churches and organisations of NCC-J have repented and confessed this sin and asked for forgiveness from God and our neighbours. We have been seeking to live the gospel of reconciliation with sisters and brothers of Asian countries. To keep silent now about the acts of the Tokyo Metropolitan Government is, for us, none other than dishonouring our confessions. We will not repeat committing the same sin to be a witness of the truth of the gospel of reconciliation.

Our confession

We have been listening to minorities in Japan and Asian countries. We have come to believe that we Christians in Japan can never sing the Kimigayo nor hold the Hinomaru, in order to realise a society where people of different cultures and ethnicity can live together. We confess before God that we will never repeat what we did towards the people of Okinawa and Asian countries during the colonisation and aggressive wars. We believe solely in God who sacrificed life for every human being and who rules history. We will never again turn our face from God for fear of pressure or criticism.

*NCC-J is committed
to stand firmly
on the biblical
gospel principles of
reconciliation under
the guidance of God*

National Christian Council in Japan calls for prayer and action

The NCC-J had been advocating against the legislation of the national anthem and flag, which is against the principles of pacifism, democracy and fundamental human rights as enshrined in the constitution.

Member churches and organisations of NCC-J are praying and acting together for the abolition of the compulsory use of the Hinomaru and the Kimigayo in solidarity with the punished teachers. We are committed to supporting teachers and students who are suffering from the coercion.

NCC-J, which is composed of 33 churches and organisations, and the Christian Network for Peace, and includes the Catholic Church in Japan, the Reformed Church in Japan, the Japan Evangelical Association, and the Church of Christ In Japan, concluded, 'We denounce war as Christians' in the advent of 2003. Upon the recognition that the Hinomaru and the Kimigayo is part of the process of miniaturisation, we call for resistance to coercion and opposition to the military co-operation of Japanese government in Iraq.

NCC-J is committed to stand firmly on the biblical gospel principles of reconciliation under the guidance of God, the only Lord of Christians, in solidarity with brothers and sisters of churches in Asia. We, Christians in Japan, are committed to work together to bring about the New Times based on the love and peace as Jesus showed.

Ms Reiko Suzuki, Moderator
Rev. Toshimasa Yamamoto
General Secretary
National Christian Council in Japan

Institute for Advanced Study in Asian Cultures and Theologies (IASACT)

The purpose of IASACT is to provide space and time for Asian Christian scholars to undertake research and writing in the broad area of Asian cultures and theologies, with a narrower field of focus for a given year. For 2005, it is Asian religions and cultures.

IASACT is held annually for a period of six weeks in a Christian University or seminary in Asia that can provide the necessary resources.

In providing these opportunities for research and writing, IASACT hopes to:

- strengthen theological education in Asian Christian universities and colleges,
- enable scholars to work together on an intra-Asian dialogue in theological discourse,
- encourage cross-disciplinary as well as cross-religious discussions,
- engage North American theological educators to join Asian Christian scholars for intercontextual theological explorations. In the first instance, this will be with the Graduate Theological Union (GTU), Berkley, California, USA.

Participation

IASACT is open to scholars in the fields of theology, religious studies, humanities or social sciences who have completed their academic doctoral studies, are currently teaching or in the process of writing their dissertations. For IASACT 2005, 15 places have been reserved for Asian Christian scholars and five places for scholars recommended by GTU.

Scholars who would like to avail themselves of this opportunity should, by the end of September 2004, submit their research proposals, curriculum vitae and a recommendation from their departmental or institutional head to:

Professor David Kwang-sun Suh
Dean, IASACT

Executive Director
Asian Christian Higher Education Institute
Room 925, David C. Lam Building
Hong Kong Baptist University
Kowloon, Hong Kong

(Or send papers electronically to achei@hkbu.edu.hk)

Research proposals should show clearly how these relate to Asian theologies, Asian religious studies and/or Asian cultures.

Letters of recommendation should be signed. If sent electronically, these should be from the email address of the departmental or institutional head.

While primary weight for selection will be given to the quality of the submission, every effort will be made to achieve regional, denominational and gender balance.

The faculty of IASACT will make the final selection of the 20 scholars.

IASACT 2005

Focus: Asian religions and cultures

Date: 11 June – 23 July 2005

Venue: Chung Chi College, The Chinese University of Hong Kong, Shatin, Hong Kong

Kampuchea Christian Council



KCC Christmas celebration, 2003

Beginnings of Christianity in Cambodia

Cambodia is a Buddhist nation. The Spanish Catholics were the first Christians to arrive in Cambodia, during the year 1555, with the 'sword and the cross' style that they had used in other countries as colonisers. The arrival of the Christian Missionary Alliance in 1923 sparked the spread of the Gospel though personal evangelism among the Buddhists. The first Cambodian Bible was published in 1954.

In 1954–1970, church growth was slow. When World Vision, charismatics and Seventh Day Adventists arrived in the mid-70s the church grew in numbers, along with material support that flowed into the system. Because it was identified with the imperialist West, the church went through persecutions during the Khmer Rouge regime. Between 1979 and 1989 the church went underground. Christians were either eliminated or fled the country. By 1989, only about seven or eight church leaders had managed to survive.

Through the dark days of the life of Cambodians, the Christian Conference of Asia, the World Council of Churches and partner agencies participated in reconstruction and rehabilitation efforts and in human resource development, working along with the central government and with churches.

Efforts to unite

Christian Central Committee

Since 1989, there have been a number of attempts by church leaders to unite. In 1990 there was an attempt to form the Christian Central Committee. Ten persons met every night to discuss their work. But it did not last long because of personal misunderstanding on leadership. In 1991, the group met again with municipal personnel from the Department of Religion. The CCC was reactivated, but again, they could not work together, so it died.

In 9 April 1990, the Cambodian government permitted Christians to worship openly. Its purpose was that the church would help in rehabilitating and developing the devastated country. More church groups and parachurch groups were formed in the different parts of the country—about 110 congregations with a total of about 3,500 members. Cambodia became a fertile ground for evangelical and fundamentalist Christian missions. Missionaries from North America and Asian countries extended support to convert people and plant churches. Churches from Korea, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Malaysia and Singapore sent representatives on regular basis. This led to deeper di-

visions within the churches. The people were confused by the entry of different denominations and missionaries of different backgrounds.

General Council of Cambodian Churches

In 1993, another unification attempt was made with the organisation of the General Council of Cambodian Churches. Registered and recognised by the government of Cambodia, there were about 39 member churches, which included both denominational and local national churches. But by 1995 the main problem was the lack of theologically trained pastors and proper leadership. The office bearers could not get along well and so it too became a defunct organisation.

Cambodia Christian Women's Association

The Cambodia Christian Women's Association started as a praying group in 1993 and in 1994 it was registered as a local NGO. It became a locus for women's empowerment and participation in the socio-economic rehabilitation of Cambodia. It had many projects, such as sewing, weaving, credit, leadership training, Bible study and English language training for women. Church World Service assisted them by providing an advisor and teacher in English and gave exposures to CWS development programs. In 1997, an intern from Australia, Emma Leslie, came to help with the work.

Cambodian Christian Youth Association

Since 1994 the CCYA had fellowships and meetings at the Cambodia Ecumenical Centre. They offered free computer and English lessons to youth. They were part of the formation of KCC but because of the

leadership problems of KCC, by 2001 the Youth Association and its projects disappeared from the scene.

Kampuchea Christian Council

In August 1998 came a historic breakthrough. Eighty leaders from different parts of Cambodia joined together and formed the Kampuchea Christian Council (KCC). It was a transitional conference. A constitution was adopted and office bearers were elected of whom the general secretary was Pastor Say Bunthan. This ecumenical initiative was a watershed in Cambodian church history in bringing Cambodian Christians together.

The Kampuchea Christian Council was accepted into full membership of CCA on 2 June 2000 at the opening session of the 11th General Assembly held in Tomohon, Indonesia. The General Secretary was Rev. Smak Sothera.

KCC reorganisation

In February 2002 a team coordinator among a committee of three persons, all ministers of the Gospel, was named. The Cambodia Christian Women's Association and Cambodia Christian Youth Association were integrated as desks. On 20 March two members were added to the executive committee. A new youth group was organised, and a committee for the youth was selected.

KCC's mission statement

The Kampuchea Christian Council aims to develop fellowship and unity among Christians in Cambodia and carry out God's mission to



Sewing and weaving closing program

Council focus

produce responsible and empowered churches for them to pursue abundant and meaningful life for all.

KCC's goals

- To develop fellowship and unity among churches in Cambodia and promote joint programs, projects and activities among the various churches and Christian denominations and Christian organisations in Cambodia to strengthen the mission of the church,
- To serve as an organisation amongst the churches and Christian organisations for the exchange and reconciliation of views on matters of common interests.
- To carry out God's mission and promote joint planning and cooperative action.
- To be the symbol of Christian unity
- To show concern and express opinion on issues affecting the human rights, and moral, economic and social life of the community.
- To liaise with other Asian and world Christian organisations.

KCC's programs

- **Church development**
Leadership training
Church planning
Spiritual development
- **Christian mission and unity**
- **Social development**
Street children
HIV/AIDS centre, counselling
Natural disaster assistance

- **Gender justice and ecumenical concerns**

Family fellowship and rally for all KCC churches—theme: gender sensitivity

Ecumenical fellowship for pastors

- **Youth desk**

educational and leadership training (four times a year), computer classes program, English class, Saturday fellowship, birthday fellowship.

- **Women's desk**

Worship, study and fellowship, International Women's Day

General fellowship of women

Saturday worship, B.S. fellowship

Capability leadership building

Women's English class

Women's spirituality in the family, church and community

Socioeconomic projects: sewing and weaving classes, credit and primary school.

The Women's desk is assisted by CCA through WEAVE (Women's Ecumenical Accompaniment for Vision and Empowerment) with Dominica Lagat-Faurillo from the United Church of Christ in the Philippines as the ecumenical accompanier.

Church membership

There are now 35 churches and groups of churches with an estimate of more than 15,000 individual members. More and more leaders of church and organisations had been expressing their desire to join KCC. However they are also keenly watching its development and growth.

—Dominica Lagat-Faurillo



Spirituality of women Sunday school teachers' training

Kobia and Annan meet

WCC and UN general secretaries discuss Iraq, Israel/Palestine, role of religion

Churches' concern over the situation in Iraq and the Israel/Palestine conflict, the role of religion in conflict, and working relations between the World Council of Churches (WCC) and the United Nations Organisation were the focus of the first meeting between the UN secretary-general Kofi Annan and the WCC general secretary Rev. Dr Samuel Kobia. Annan welcomed Kobia's initiative to invite the council's member churches to mark the International Day of Peace with prayer services.

'On behalf of WCC member churches, I expressed admiration to Annan for his leadership role at a time when multilateralism is threatened and under attack,' Kobia said after the meeting. The UN secretary-general acknowledged that both organisations' agendas are intertwined, and praised the partnership between them.

The WCC general secretary voiced churches' concerns over the situation in Iraq, which he characterised as 'critical, with an escalation of violence, because of the wrong policies of the occupation forces'. While appreciating that the sanctions are over, Kobia stressed that 'an exit strategy would begin with the withdrawal of the US from all civilian affairs', including management, financial responsibility and oil. 'We also see the need to create a mechanism for truth and reconciliation, which should include in its mandate the actions of the occupying powers,' Kobia added.

Regarding the Israel/Palestine conflict, Kobia shared the WCC assessment of the Road Map and Geneva Accords. While the first 'does not comprise any original proposal that could help the two sides to overcome the bloody cycle of occupation, terrorism and retribution,' the latter 'stimulates the public opinions on both sides to overcome stereotypes and find a common understanding of respect for the other'. Annan pointed out the need for cooperation between the



Sam Kobia meets Kofi Annan at the UN headquarters in New York

WCC Ecumenical Accompaniment Program in Palestine/Israel (EAPPI) and the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA).

Committed since its inception to interreligious dialogue, the WCC is concerned with the growing role of religion in politics and conflict. A negative force when used 'to gain political power and emphasise the exclusiveness and primacy of one's own group', religion can also make a constructive contribution 'by emphasising fundamental ethics and humanity,' Kobia said. 'To foster goodwill and understanding between communities, interreligious dialogue has to be at the grassroots level and address issues of common concern in the struggle against oppression and injustice,' he added. Annan encouraged a dialogue between civilisations, stressing that while Islam is isolated in Western countries Christian communities are in a difficult position in many Muslim countries.

Expressing appreciation that the UN General Assembly has designated 21 September as an International Day of Peace, Kobia shared with Annan his intention to propose to the WCC governing bodies that they invite member churches to mark that day with special prayer services.

'As a day of prayer for peace, the invitation could also reach people of other faiths,' Kobia stressed. Annan warmly welcomed the proposal, saying that it responds to his hope that the International Day of Peace will encourage people in different contexts to reflect together on what they can do for peace. Among other issues of common concern mentioned at the meeting were poverty, the HIV/AIDS pandemic, and conflicts in Africa. Kobia also took advantage of the meeting to invite the UN secretary-general to participate in and address the WCC assembly to be held in Porto Alegre in February 2006.

—WCC Media

On the wings of a dove

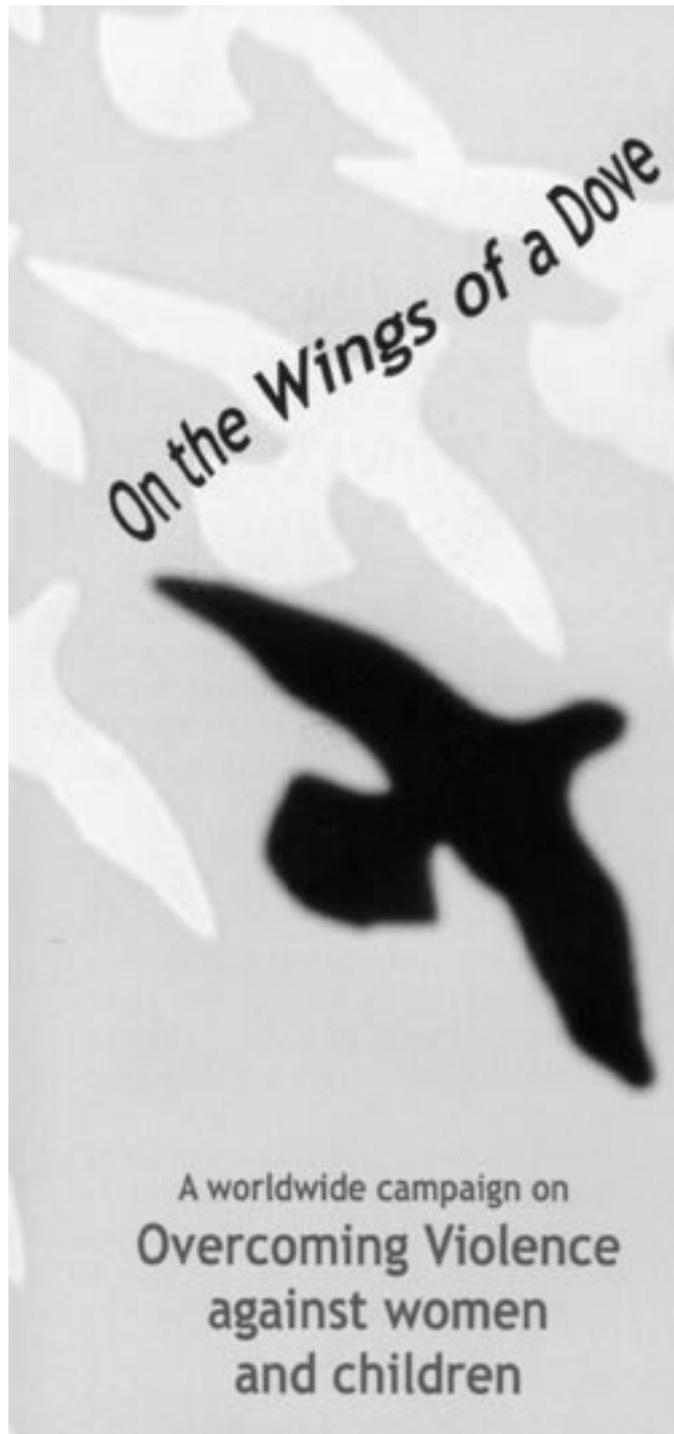
A worldwide campaign on overcoming violence against women and children

Member churches and councils of CCA are invited to share the 16 days of 'On the wings of a dove', linking the vision of the Decade to Overcome Violence with overcoming violence against women and children during the season of Advent, when we prepare for the incarnation of God's peace in our world.

'On the wings of a dove' is a worldwide campaign initiated by the World Council of Churches to engage the churches in developing pastoral and practical responses and actions to overcome violence against women and children.

Churches, individual congregations and groups are called to:

- provide safe spaces for the telling of stories of suffering, survival and resistance,
- link with other groups and movements and international organisations working to overcome violence against women and children,
- make alliances with other faith communities to address this common concern,
- expose church practices and theologies that collude with the abuse of power and lead to violence,
- develop practical and pastoral responses towards justice and healing for survivors of violence, and counselling for perpetrators of violence.



What you can do

- Give publicity to the global campaign and ensure that churches, local congregations and others plan events leading up to the campaign period, during the campaign period and after.
- Get the information about the campaign into newsletters.
- Get the campaign into church calendars.
- Get other church and secular women's organisations involved.
- Identify the forms of violence against women and children you wish to address.
- Contribute to the WCC process of gathering stories of good practice of churches, their strategies, official church statements etc.
- Prepare worship resources, liturgies, rituals of healing and daily meditation books to highlight the commitment to women and children.
- Prepare Bible studies and collections of prayers, poems etc. for your context.
- Advertise on webpages, where available, and share information for linking with the WCC webpages.

For further information contact 'On the wings of a dove', World Council of Churches, PO Box 2100, CH-1211 Geneva 2, Switzerland. Email: ag@wcc-coe.org. Web: www.wcc-coe.org.

Serving together beyond boundaries

Ahn Jae Woong reflects on John 17:20–23

This year we celebrate the 30th anniversary of Asia Sunday, which has been observed year after year since 1974 in order to commemorate the formation of the Christian Conference of Asia.

The theme of Asia Sunday this year is 'Serving together beyond boundaries'. In Asia we live within so many boundaries. We tend to live compartmentalised lives. The boundaries include geopolitical boundaries, religiocultural boundaries, ethnic-racial boundaries and many different shades of ideological boundaries. We limit ourselves within these boundaries so that we find it difficult to cross over them, much less break them down.

Through this focus of Asia Sunday 2004, we wish to share that serving together is a step towards breaking down all kinds of boundaries. By serving together, we build solidarity with others, which is a collective witness to our God. By living together we build communities of peace for all God's people. By serving together we build a chain of networks with people of other faiths or no faith and civil society groups so as to overcome all forms of violence. By serving together we build unity in order to seek God's grace to live in peace and harmony among our neighbours.

This year we remember the Lao Evangelical Church in Laos for their struggle to witness our God in a socialist country.

Today we live in a world full of uncertainties. Is the world becoming a killing field? The everyday happenings in different parts of the world make one think so. Human lives have become so devalued. We start our day by listening to and reading about killings of innocent people in the name of a 'war on

terrorism', torture and humiliation in prisons, and the illegal occupation of countries by those who have military and economic power. There is a general apathy towards human rights and dignity. It is time people came out of their boundaries and reached out for others to build together communities of peace everywhere.

A Korean story

Let me share with you a story about the late Rev. Moon Ik Hwan. Rev. Moon was a highly respected Presbyterian pastor, Old Testament scholar and well-known poet, as well as a democratic and unification campaigner. One of his great achievements was the translation of the Bible in 1970 in collaboration with the Roman Catholic Church in which he was the chief translator.

He became a committed human rights advocate in the 1970s under the Park Chung Hee military dictatorship. He also became a national leader in the unification movement in the 1980s and 1990s. One day he decided to visit Pyongyang, the capital of North Korea, to meet with the 'great leader' Kim Il Sung. Of course, it was an extraordinary decision. He made it to Pyongyang and met with Kim Il Sung and discussed the peaceful unification of the Korean peninsula. The news received wide media coverage. It received front-page treatment in the Korean press. It was also shocking news to the Korean people.

On his return, he was interrogated by the Korean CIA, put behind bars, made to stand trial and sent to jail for a couple of years. But because of this one man, for his commitment and action, for breaking down ideological boundaries, the way was opened for others to visit North Korea. Later, famous writers such as Hwang Suk Young, Kim Ha Ke and mem-

ber of parliament Suh Kyung Won followed in Rev. Moon Ik Hwan's footsteps. A young South Korean female college student, Im Soo Kyung, became well known internationally when she visited Pyongyang to participate at the international youth festival. When they returned, all of them, without exception, paid a heavy price by serving prison terms. Since then, the interaction between the people of the north and the south has become closer and has grown. Today, family reunion programs by the Red Cross of both the north and the south, sports and cultural exchanges, regular visits by religious leaders, humanitarian aid by Christian organisations and civil society groups and so on still continue.

Rev. Moon Ik Hwan, a pioneering leader of the unification movement, who frequently went in and out of Korean prisons, passed away ten years ago.

I am sure you may have similar stories of people who have demolished all kinds of boundaries in Asia. They are the ones who make a difference in our history. In fact, without demolishing boundaries we are unable to live as good neighbours.

'They may all be one'

Let me reflect on our biblical passage today. According to John 17:21 Jesus prayed that 'they may all be one. As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us.' When we talk about ecumenism or the ecumenical movement, we often cite this particular passage as a biblical source of foundation.

If we look closely at the passage 'they may all be one' we will see that it means God in me and I am in God, and equally everyone else also in God. After all, 'they may all be one' is a clear statement that there is no

boundary at all. It reminds us of the theology of the trinity, where three persons are all in one.

Paul's letter to the Galatians tells us the same. 'There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male or female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus.' (Galatians 3:28)

Those who have minds and hearts like

Jesus, who try to cross boundaries if any, breakdown boundaries if any, demolish barriers if any and accept their neighbours far and near as one, are sisters and brothers in Christ. This is the meaning of the ecumenical movement and this is what the ecumenical movement is all about.

Without such a mind and a heart, it is not possible to have a person like Rev. Moon Ik

Hwan. All we have to do is to serve together beyond boundaries in order to live in peace and harmony with our neighbours whoever they may be so that we all may be one.

(CCA General Secretary Dr Ahn Jae Woong gave this address at the Kowloon Union Church in Hong Kong on Asia Sunday, 23 May 2004.)

Ralph Lee looks at Acts 16:16–24 and reflects on the state of ecumenism in Hong Kong

Ecumenism in Hong Kong is at its most critical time since 1997. It is at a low ebb. The SARS epidemic and the 1 July demonstration last year have resulted in more people wanting to seek a deeper meaning of life and looking for inspiration from the church in society. At the same time, our Christian institutions, schools, social services and hospitals are facing formidable challenges from the funding system and rapid changes in the education system.

For a long time we have been building our Christian services, but now assets have become liabilities, as many do not share our mission.

Yet, the most critical time is often also the most suitable and opportune time for God. And for us too.

Mission of the church

If we adhere to Jesus' commands to 'love the Lord our God' and 'love our neighbour' then our most immediate concerns are to the people as a whole in our society rather than the structures we possess. We are more accountable to God and our neighbours than to the government of Hong Kong.

The church is above institutions, structures and the government. The church is the people and their future. The church is even above ourselves and our own denominational boundaries.

Acts 16 tells about a slave girl possessed by a spirit of divination who brought large profits to her owners by telling fortunes. Divination is the art of discerning the future, and the girl's spirit was the Python spirit associated with the god Apollo.

The slave girl followed Paul and his company shouting, 'These men are slaves of the Most High God, who proclaim to you a way of salvation.'

The difference between what the slave girl and Paul offered was very clear: profits or salvation. We think that by our human efforts and the blessings of God we have built our 'empire' of large profits, but we may not have brought salvation to society and people.

Salvation to Hong Kong

The challenge to us today is to liberate ourselves from our self-made boundaries and denominationalism, from our self-interest and from our self-inflated egos. We cannot afford to be self-satisfied and complacent with what we have now, for that also puts us into self-made boundaries.

If we really are here to exist to serve God and others, then the people out there are looking for a prophetic church, working together, not divided but united, to be the driving force of its society. Here is an unknown water to wade in, to prepare a way for the Lord. This way is above all boundaries. It is not under our control but is in God's hand—we are just his humble servants.

Our sole interest must be to serve the least of our brothers and sisters, the marginalised and the vulnerable, not our own! Our reward will be from God himself and not our visible returns measured by numbers and money. Our objective must be to see God's kingdom come on earth, as in heaven.

Stewards of God's trust

The existence of the church is to foster God's will to share God's love and to bring healing

to people's hurts and sufferings. We are entrusted by God and endowed with resources and opportunities in order to bring wholeness and healing to a broken society.

Sometimes I feel we, like the prodigal son, have squandered or not wisely spent our resources and have missed opportunities to bring hope and faith to people who need God's mercy! We may not have buried God's 'bag of gold', but if we continue not to best use the talents and abilities God has given us, then the opportunities we have may be taken away from us one day!

If we dare to invest in 'people' in the future development of Hong Kong, even with the little we have, then, as Jesus promises, 'For to all those who have, more will be given.' (Mathew 25:29)

Our biggest assets are the congregations and the good reputation and the trust of the people we still have. But we need to join together, as individually we are isolated and weak. 'Two are better than one,' it says in Ecclesiastes 4:9, 'because they have a good reward for their toil.'

Jesus' hope and prayer is that we may be one. One in union with God, not related separately, only occasionally sitting together for breakfast.

This time in history is a most critical time. Only when we can put aside our baggages can we create a new heaven and new earth, serving together.

(Rev. Ralph Lee of the Methodist Church in Hong Kong delivered this reflection at the breakfast prayer meeting organised by CCA and the Hong Kong Christian Council in connection with Asia Sunday.)

Networking in mission

Lee Hong-Jung looks beyond partnership towards networking in the web of God's mission

A historical development of mission-church relations

There has been an ongoing paradigm change in the development of mission–church relations in the history of mission, which can be classified into the four stages: (1) pioneer (2) parent (3) partner (4) participant.

The first stage was **pioneer**, which required a gift of leadership, along with other gifts. Since there were no *believers* in the so-called *non-Christian world*, missionaries ought to lead and do much of the work themselves. However, this stage was closely related to the Western expansionism towards the non-Western world based on the subject-object way of viewing the world with the ultimate superiority complex of Christianity and Western civilisation.

The second stage was **parent**, which required a gift of teaching and nurturing. The so-called *daughter* churches had a growing child's relationship to the so-called *mother* churches. But the parent could not avoid paternalism, and was suspiciously co-worked with the Western colonialism. At this stage Christianisation was recognised as the most important part of the civilisation project, that is, the Westernisation.

The third stage has been **partner**, which requires change from a parent-child relationship to an adult-adult relationship. Difficult for both to change, but essential to the church's becoming a mature adult. However, to a certain extent, the reality of the partnership, even after demolishing the historical and geographical colonial structure, has still contained a neo-colonial discursive nature and dependency in it.

The fourth stage is **participant**, which recognises every church in the five oceans and six continents has been identified as the subjective participant of God's mission, particularly in its own local area. In this stage, networking and sharing have become the most important principles of doing mis-

The goal of networking is to build relationships, expand alliances, and establish networks of groups and individuals committed to values implied by the biblical reign of God, ultimately weaving the web of mission

sion. At this stage missionaries need to work constantly to accept their marginal and ambiguous status. Missionaries are no longer, if they ever truly were, primary movers, but collaborators, assistants and servants. The primary agent of mission is the Spirit of God. Missionaries must not muzzle the Spirit or try to wrest initiatives from God. If missionaries presume too quickly to be the mouthpiece of God, they may overlook the still and small voice with which God likes to animate the silence. God, who comes to all God's peoples even before the missionaries' coming, has always been working for the salvation of all God's peoples in their histories. Therefore missionaries should learn salvific histories and cultures of all God's people as they participate in God's mission in their respective peoples.

Partnership matters: mutuality and power sharing

After the colonial era, the term *partnership* has become part of the standard vocabulary in mission and development circles. It has been very convenient for agencies and churches in the North to speak of the churches and groups in the South with whom they have a relationship as their partner churches and groups.

The meaning of the word *partnership* suggests a relational quality of pairs who have freely and objectively chosen to work together for a common cause. But, in reality, in many instances the economic disparities are such that it is hard to see how the choices could be made in an objective manner. The concept of *partnership* is therefore still ambiguous, so that it is not appropriate to disregard those ambiguities by an uncritical use of the word *partnership*, particularly in the context of globalisation today.

To be partners can only be incomplete and tentative, so that it becomes a goal, not an acquisition. It is something to be constructed, patiently, step by step. We should allow sufficient room to question one another. There can be failures, and nothing is taken for granted. Partnership in mission requires mutuality, not just the mutual recognition of gifts, but also of needs. The former *mother* churches are beginning to learn that their former *daughter*, now partner, churches have particular gifts to offer, although they have as yet to learn sufficiently enough to expose their own needs. Mutuality in mission relationships is a necessary step in moving away from the one-directional flow of the past.

Partnership in mission also requires openness or transparency. Transparency means the removal of certain obstacles that make it difficult for partners to perceive one another as they really are. In order to identify wrong perceptions and blockages and cor-

rect them an ongoing dialogue is necessary. Very often mission and development agencies themselves stand in the way of open communication. Partnership should allow each other to be able to step aside at certain moments, so that the other is free to make his/her own observation and interpretation. A creative tension in partnership challenges that God's mission demands a balance and integration of different dimensions. The mutual responsibility to challenge and to call one another to accountability is at the heart of the partnership. While we are engaged in God's mission, we are also being invited to mutual transformation through partnership in mission. When a mutually transformative dialogue is missing, we are degraded into the captivity of monologue, though we can still perform good gestures as if we have a partnership.

Partnership in mission also requires a just sharing of power between the partners. In practical terms, this means a sharing of authority to make decisions on priorities and on the allocation of human and financial resources. Between the fundamentally unequal partners the initiative lies ultimately with the powerful. The powerless can only ask or claim but has no other alternative than to accept the situation or to break the relationship, which could be the point of departure for the empowerment of the powerless through a process of self-reliance.

The most profound way in which power is exercised is reflected in the ministry of Jesus Christ. It is the *Kenosis*, the way of self-emptying by which power is neither shared nor transferred but transformed to become empowerment, enabling those made powerless by sin, poverty or oppression to regain their dignity and subjectivity. Empowerment is not a method or a strategy but a liberating gift, a fruit of the Spirit. Partnership in mission could be transformed in this manner by a genuine act of surrendering power. In reality, an equal representation in a decision-making process and structure can be a way of expressing self-emptying spirituality.

Partners in mission are mutually dependent each other as one body of Christ. To build an authentic partnership therefore takes time and requires patience with an attitude of humility. Partners in mission, through their

interdependency, are called in Christ to be the sacramental and incarnated community to participate in empowering the web of God's mission.

Serving a wider ecumenism through a global-local and inter-local interaction

Ecumenism has two interrelated dimensions and directions. One is a macro dimension, which is outwardly open ended towards the biblical mandate to 'bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ' (Ephesians 1:10). And the other is a micro dimension which is inwardly oriented towards the biblical hope that 'all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me.' (John 17:21) Although it appears that the macro ecumenism is more focussing on God's mission in the world, and the micro ecumenism on the unity in Jesus Christ among Christian churches, the two dimensions of ecumenism are inseparable entities of mission. The authenticity of mission must be approved by promoting unity, and that of unity must be expressed through participating in God's mission. Doing mission-in-partnership should therefore integrate mission and unity through a global-local and inter-local interaction both within and without churches.

This macro-ecumenical perspective provides a possibility of engaging in a multi-religiously and culturally oriented Christian global ministry for the fullness of life for all, going beyond the boundaries of the West and the East, of the North and the South, and of religions. In this sense, Christian solidarity in a multi-religiously and culturally conflictive context should serve for reconciliation for the fullness of life for all, not for exclusive justification of Christians.

Paradigm shift in partnership from bilateral to multilateral

While the former *mother* churches in the West engage in an ongoing dialogical process of integrating different denominations among themselves, they are also eager to maintain bilateral relationships with their former *daughter* churches, based on their own historical, denominational, confessional

traditions. I do not want to minimise the positive side of a bilateral relation. It contains, however, a rather negative historical connotation, and has an ultimate limitation to respond to the mission context of globalisation. This bilateral partnership can be easily degraded into a possessive, exclusive, closed relationship of discursive colonialism, creating alienation, competition and disunity among local churches.

The bilateral relation should be regarded as an entry point to encounter wider Christian families in each country. Two churches in the bilateral partnership should understand their role as a mediator to open an inclusive relation between churches in both countries, aiming at serving wider ecumenism rather than strengthening the exclusively institutionalised boundary between two churches. Particularly in the context of global churches such bilateral relations need to be transformed into multilateral and interconfessional relations, so that it can better promote local and regional ecumenism rather than fragmentation. Otherwise such bilateral relations may become a stumbling block to develop local and regional ecumenism, playing a role of controlling and reproducing the mode of a neocolonial relation.

Regional and local empowerment by promoting local and regional initiatives

There are various global ecumenical institutions that approach regional and local churches with similar ecumenical advocacy initiatives, for example WCC, WARC, IWF, CWM, Mission 21, UEM and EMS. Sometimes local and regional churches feel that they are being objectified by these institutions for their own institutional organisational purpose, rather than being subjective participants of God's mission in their own local and regional contexts. Promoting local and regional ecumenism should approve authenticity of these global ecumenical initiatives. Local and regional churches must develop their own initiatives and subjectivity by integrating these global initiatives into their own context, establishing one regional local ecumenical network, communion, or forum, in order to promote common understanding and witness of mission in their own contexts.

Beyond partnership towards networking

There seems to be a call for movement going beyond partnership towards networking. The metaphor of networking seems to provide a proper image to describe a new model of doing common mission together. The goal of networking is to build relationships, expand alliances, and establish networks of groups and individuals committed to values implied by the biblical reign of God, ultimately weaving the web of mission.

Networking indicates a way people can cooperate in interactive and decentralised ways for the accomplishment of some larger purpose. Networking seems to be an inherently flexible form of human interaction and a remarkably adaptable way to react to rapidly shifting global-local and inter-local interactions, so as to encompass and express new partnerships.

Networking is essentially egalitarian with no fixed centre and with no hierarchies so that its approach can be rigorously horizontal and multidimensional rather than vertical and one-dimensional. Networking is based on the ideal of interdependent relationships, as seen in the image of the web of life, which people are free to nurture, inform and empower one another.

Networking is also holistic in orientation. It implies to act on a basic human need to communicate and to construct a social reality to complement and contextualise individual experiences. In networking isolation is replaced by community, and in the strength of the whole lies the only hope of the poor to withstand the reigning powers of the age. The networking model of doing common mission means keeping the focus on the local church as the primary actor and locus of initiative in mission.

Networking means sharing. Sharing might well mean more than just the reciprocity of giving and receiving, more also than the mutual recognition of needs. Sharing is the organising principle of life itself, of economic and social justice, and of community. By sharing the web of life itself can be empowered, and doing so the individual and communal entities in the web can be empowered. If sharing is the organising principle of the *oikonomia*, then dominating economic

system is intrinsically godless. Confronted with idolatry and injustice, mission becomes denouncing the idols, exposing the unjust mechanism and bringing about justice.

In networking there is no longer a movement that goes from the sender or giver to the receiver, from the rich to the poor, from the north to the south. Instead, there is a movement that leads from brokenness to healing, from division to reconciliation, from injustice to justice.

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World mission today is the common mission of all churches and Christian communities to proclaim the way and the truth and the life in Jesus Christ to the world. To do this, all churches and Christian communities need to enter into the covenant of networking for sustaining, nurturing and resourcing one another to face this common task, that is, the covenant of the web of God's mission.

We live in the age of networks. Mission is all about reconstructing the web of relations with all living beings, that is, the web of life, in the light of the gospel. In this sense, the networking model can be the most effective way of transforming institutionalised ecumenism into people/life-centred ecumenism

with a radical ecological conversion. Now we can imagine how the networking model can further the work of mission. We can imagine ecumenical networks on six continents doing mission in cooperation with God's spirit and in response to the challenges and opportunities of the twenty-first century. We can imagine a world where sharing rather than acquiring becomes the organising principle of economics. We can imagine a world in which God's people—the whole community of life—can learn to dwell together with reverence for one another, with courage to ask hard questions, with willingness to shatter false images, and with the freedom to imagine the future. We can imagine circles and circles of people who are willing to extend their hands and to go around and round and round again.

Church itself matters: mission to the church

In thinking of the networking model in mission we all realise that the church itself is its own mission field. There can be no mission of the church without renewal, rereading of the Bible with new eyes, rediscovery of the liturgy and the meaning of the Eucharist in the context of local history and culture. How can the Christian community share the bread and the wine of communion without sharing its daily bread with the hungry and its home with the homeless? How can the Christian community believe that they are the one body in Christ without achieving a visible unity in diversity? How can the Christian community believe in the Cross without self-emptying its power and without struggling for justice and peace, healing and reconciliation? How can the Christian community confess its faith in God' creation without recognising itself as a part of the web of life and without taking care of nature as the essential partner of their life? The renewal of the church for being church in Christ through mutual challenge and mutual transformation in the web of God's mission may be the most fundamental and prior mission agenda today.

Dr Lee Hong Jung from Korea is joint executive secretary in the Justice, International Affairs, Development and Service program area of CCA.

A History of the Ecumenical Movement in Asia

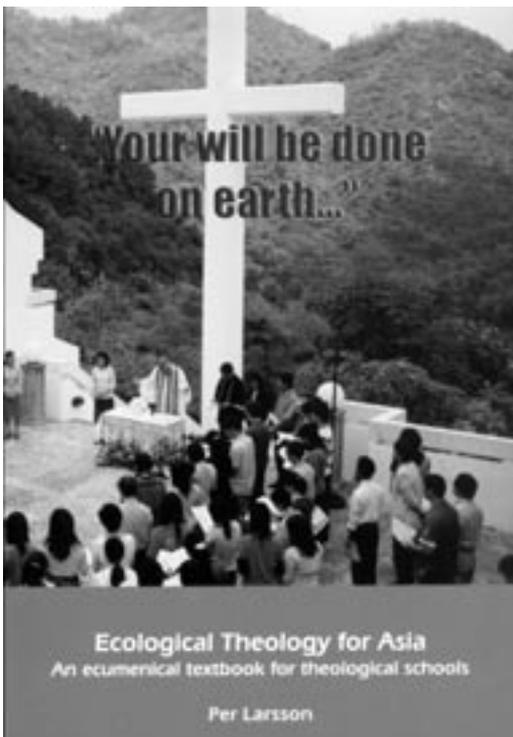
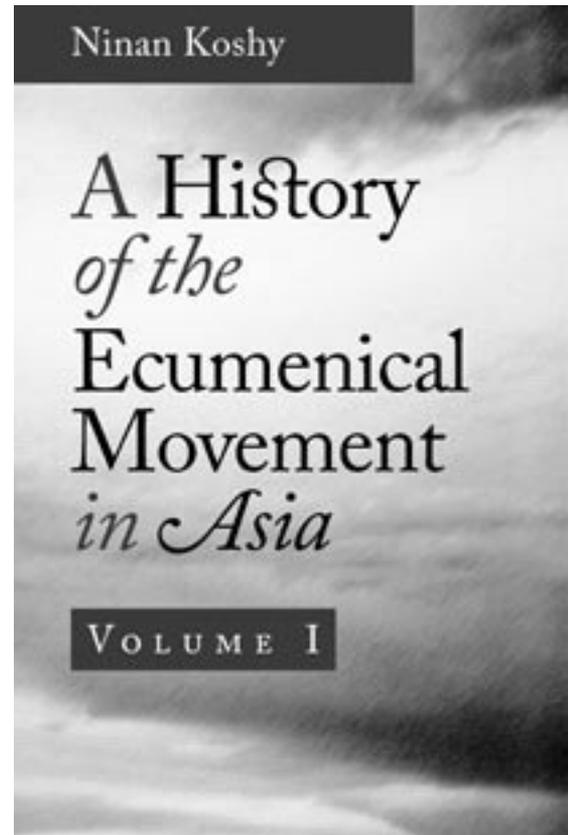
Volume I, Ninan Koshy
394 pages, US\$30

A History of the Ecumenical Movement in Asia By Ninan Koshy is a scholarly work based on considerable research, narrating and interpreting the evolution and development of one of the most significant movements of the twentieth century in Asia.

Written from an authentically Asian perspective, it challenges several long-held assumptions and claims in ecumenical and church history. Tracing the beginnings of the Asian ecumenical movement to the stirrings of nationalism in Asia, it makes an objective assessment of the missionary movement's contribution to the Asian ecumenical movement, and the significant role of Asian church leaders in broadening and clarifying the meaning of ecumenism is clearly brought out.

Right at the very beginning the author dismisses the facile claim that "Christianity is moving South" by proving and affirming that Christianity is an Asian religion. The book begins with a chapter on early Asian Christianity and moves on through the inspiring saga of ecumenism in Asia. It closes with a fresh perspective on the prospects of the ecumenical movement in Asia. The history of the ecumenical movement is set against the backdrop of developments in Asian history, bringing out vividly not only the context in which the ecumenical movement functioned at various stages but also the demands the context made on the mission of the church.

The author has done a remarkable job in weaving together the varied histories of the Christian Conference of Asia, the Asia and Pacific Alliance of YMCAs and the World Student Christian Federation Asia-Pacific Region, highlighting their common themes and concerns.



“Your Will Be Done on Earth ...”

Ecological Theology for Asia: An Ecumenical Textbook for Theological Schools
Per Larsson
144 pages, US\$7

The rapidly deteriorating ecological situation is a great, new and unprecedented challenge to Christian faith. This book, authored by Per Larsson and published by the Christian Conference of Asia, is an introduction to ecological theology, prepared as a manual for students at theological seminaries and other church-related institutions in Asia. Other Christians faced with threats of environmental destruction could also find inspiration and guidelines for Christian thinking and action here. The intention is to provide readers with a practical and understandable tool in order to awaken awareness and better see the relationship between the environmental crisis and Christian life at large. The ignorance among many Christians and even theologians about the biblical foundations for ecological involvement is striking and should be a matter for grave concern. The author forcefully argues that Christians have been given a fundamental and special responsibility as stewards of God's creation. They have a complementary role to play apart from the endeavours of politicians and the secular green movements. Salvation in Christ is meant not only for the human being. God's holy creation must also be included.

Both books are available from the Christian Conference of Asia

WCC calls on Indonesian government to end violence in Maluku

The WCC general secretary, Rev. Dr Samuel Kobia, has called on the Indonesian Government to 'take immediate steps to put an end to the violence in the Maluku'.

In a 5 May letter to the president, Megawati Soekarnoputri, he supported a similar call from the local Protestant and Roman Catholic Church representatives in the face of 'the outbreak of violence and conflict between Muslims and Christians in the Maluku region since 25 April'.

WCC member churches in the region have consistently striven for peace and reconciliation between the two communities and have promoted interreligious dialogue. 'It is important that these efforts do not suffer a setback because of actions of a few extremists on both sides of the religious divide,' wrote Kobia. He expressed particular concern about the attacks and acts of arson at the Indonesian Christian University in Maluku. Almost 40 people are reported to have lost their lives as a result of the ongoing violence there. 'Much of the damage and spread of violence could have been avoided if the Indonesian security forces ... had taken timely action,' Kobia suggested.

Search for Asian faces of Christ

While Asian Catholic bishops have noted that 'some followers of the great religions of Asia have no problem in accepting Jesus as a "manifestation of the Divine" or the Absolute, or as an enlightened one', it is difficult for them to see him as the 'only Saviour', which many Christians assert. In response to these difficulties, the Federation of Asian Bishops'

Breakfast prayer meeting



CCA and the Hong Kong Christian Council jointly organised a breakfast prayer meeting on 21 April in Hong Kong to focus on Asia Sunday 2004.

Rev. Ralph Lee, president of the Methodist Church in Hong Kong spoke on 'Serving together' (see page 24). CCA general secretary Ahn Jae Woong and Wong Wai Ching, CCA president, also spoke on the occasion.

Among the 65 church leaders and civil society representatives who attended the meeting were the Anglican Archbishop Peter Kwong and the Catholic Bishop Joseph Zen. Asia Sunday, which began in 1974 to commemorate the founding of CCA, is celebrated in the fourth Sunday of May every year. This year it was celebrated on 23 May by churches and ecumenical bodies in the region and outside, including at the WCC in Geneva.

As a mark of solidarity, this year's special offerings from the Asia Sunday service will be given to the Lao Evangelical Church.

Conferences' Office of Theological Concerns (FABC-OTC) organised a colloquium on 'Asian Faces of Christ' in Sampran, Thailand, on 10–15 May. The colloquium gathered 53 people, 14 of whom were women. There were five representatives from the Christian Conference of Asia.

The effort to share the gift of faith in Jesus as the 'only Saviour' is fraught with philosophical, cultural and theological difficulties, especially in the light of Asia's great religions, which are deeply intertwined with cultural values and specific worldviews.

Fr Carlos Abesamis from the Philippines spoke of the two essentials about Jesus that should be the focus, instead of the incidentals that the church is often content with. These two essentials are that Jesus was, through vibrant communion, connected with the Source, his Abba, and that he was totally poured out in mission for total salvation, which was both human and cosmic. These two essentials of union and mission, therefore, go together, like an inward journey (to the core) and an outward movement (to mission).

Inspired by the Jesus story, today's disciples will, hopefully, yearn to be in touch with the Source and out of that Wellspring be a prophet in word and act for the reign of God, Fr Abesamis said.

A paper read on behalf of Dr Jonathan Tan used a Confucian image of the sage (*sheng*) and cited Jesus as the crucified and

risen sage, whose mission had threatened powerful religious and political interests with its preferential option for the poor and marginalised, and who continues to call others to embrace and walk along this Way from its beginning to its end.

A brief paper by Fr Arthur Charles focused on the Islamic face of Jesus, while an-

other by Bishop Theotonius Gomes surveyed the Asian faces of Christ from the Islamic context of Asia.

Dr Evangeline Anderson-Rajkumar presented a feminist Christology that challenged the traditional understanding of Jesus' death on the cross as vicarious suffering, as rather a price for resisting structures of power.

New understanding of mission

The CCA general secretary has called for a new understanding of mission in Asia. Dr Ahn Jae Woong, addressing a consultation held in Seoul, said that mission should be understood as 'proclaiming and sharing Christ's gift of fullness of life for all', instead of the inherited understanding of 'church growth or denominational growth'.

Presenting a keynote address on 'The present situation in Asia and the vision of mission' at a consultation organised to celebrate the 120th year of Protestant mission in Korea, Ahn Jae Woong said that mission involves understanding what is actually needed for the Asian people to have fullness of life. 'We need to rethink our mission goals and practices to be in keeping with the spirit of Christ's ministry to bring wholeness of life and to address actual human needs,' he said.

Ahn told the 19-26 March consultation that mission that is found in the liberative and salvific motifs of the gospel should be

preached and communicated to all people. Mission includes building churches, establishing schools and setting up hostels, shelter and centres for peace and rehabilitation, he noted.

Ahn Jae Woong stressed that 'all mission strategies should be comprehensive in the areas of spirituality, human security and environmental sustainability as a way for holistic mission'. He urged the Korean churches to overcome denominational divisions in their mission and to create mission boards that have convergence of mission, which would have a far greater impact than what they are able to achieve individually.

CCA receives gift of a car

Mr Choi In Yong and his wife Ahn Jae Hee, Korean Presbyterian Christians, have presented a car (a Honda Acura) to CCA. They brought the car to the CCA Centre on 31 March 2004 and said that they were giving the car to the CCA 'as a token of our



appreciation for the good work CCA has been doing among the churches in Asia'.

(Left) Choi In Yong and Ahn Jae Hee

People

CCA

The CCA executive committee, which met in Chiang Mai 4-6 June, has extended the term of Mr **Tony Waworuntu**, joint executive sec-

retary of CCA's Justice, International Affairs, Development and Service program area for four years. Tony comes from Indonesia.

Korea

Rev. **Lee Sang Yoon** has been elected the executive director of Church World Service

in Korea. Rev. Lee is a former director of Ecumenical Relations of NCC-Korea. He is a committee member of the program area on Faith, Mission and Unity of the CCA.

Dr **Chang Yoon Jae**, a former member of the CCA presidium (1990-1995) has become an assistant professor at the department of

Christian Studies at the Ewha Womans University in Seoul. He took his doctorate from Union Theological Seminary in New York in 2003. He was one of the main speakers at the fourth Congress of Asian Theologians held in August 2003 in Thailand.

Malaysia

Rev. Dr **Herman Shastri** was re-elected the general secretary of the Council of Churches of Malaysia at its general assembly held in Kota Kinabalu on 10–13 May.

Taiwan

Rev. **Chang Te-Cheien** (Andrew) was elected the new general secretary of the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan (PCT) at its 49th general assembly held in Changhua on 13–16 April. He will assume office in June 2005. He is a former associate general secretary of the PCT and a program secretary for Christian Education for nine years.

The PCT General Assembly also elected Rev. **Chen Dao-Shiung** as the new moderator. Rev. **Chen Shin-Liang** was elected the vice-moderator.

Hong Kong



Ranjan Solomon

Mr **Ranjan Solomon** from India has been appointed director of the Hong Kong –based Ecumenical Coalition on Tourism. Ranjan has served the Young Men's Christian Association in many capacities. From 1986 to 1992 and from 1996 to 2003 he served as the executive secretary of the World Alliance of YMCAs in Geneva. He is a former executive secretary for development at the Asia Alliance of YMCAs in Hong Kong. He had a long period of service in the YMCAs in Bangalore, Jaipur and New Delhi in India.

Obituaries

Rosebelle Thu Lay Paw

Rosebelle Thu Lay Paw, director of the Myanmar Baptist Convention, passed away in Yangon on 29 March after months of illness. Rosebelle was a member of the Central Committee of the World Council of Churches

and was active in the women's work of the Myanmar Council of Churches. The Myanmar Institute of Theology, where she studied theology in the early 1970s, honoured her as a Fellow of Distinguished Christian Service in 2003.

Jack Lackavitch

Jack Lackavitch, a long-time friend of Asia, passed away on 26 March in Kelowna in Canada. For many years Jack was the United Church of Canada's overseas personnel. He was the fraternal secretary of the Student Christian Movement of India in the 1970s. Later, he moved to the Philippines, where he worked with the Student Christian Movement of the Philippines and the Institute for Religion and Culture. He returned to Canada to become the Area Secretary for South Asia and the Pacific in the Division of the World Outreach of the United Church. One of his last travels was to India early this year to attend meetings organised by the Church of North India, with which he had close association.

CCA intern

CCA wishes to appoint an intern to work from its headquarters in Hong Kong for the World Council of Churches–initiated Decade to Overcome Violence (DOV) program, which will focus on Asia in 2005. This DOV focus on Asia 2005 is a special program of the CCA, jointly organised with the WCC.

The appointment is for one year. The candidate should be male or female, single and below the age of 35. The minimum qualification is a postgraduate degree in any field of social sciences or theology. A good command of English, computer knowledge and writing skills are essential. Those who have experience in working with peace and justice issues and related organisations will be given preference.

The selected candidate will be provided with free accommodation at the CCA Centre. A monthly allowance of US\$500 will be given.

Please send your CV and photocopies of your degree and work-related certificates and an endorsement letter from your member church or the national council of churches to the address below by 15 September 2005.

The General Secretary
Christian Conference of Asia
96, 2nd District, Pak Tin Village
Mei Tin Road
Shatin, NT
Hong Kong SAR, China

Chiang Mai

Wat Phra That Doi Suthep (right) overlooks Chiang Mai, the site of the 12th General Assembly of CCA, to be held 31 March – 6 April 2005

Evening in Chiang Mai from the Ping River (centre)

The view from the Lotus Hotel, venue for the assembly (below)

