

# cca news

**The Quest for  
Peace**

**Building  
Communities of  
Peace**

**Calls for Peace  
and Justice**

**Sharing Our  
Hope for Peace**

**Welcome to  
Chiang Mai**

**CCA Turns Fifty  
in 2007**



# The Quest for Peace



Glory to God  
in the highest  
heaven and  
peace on earth  
to those with  
whom he is  
pleased

**N**ajibullah Lafraie, a lecturer in political studies at the University of Otago in Aotearoa New Zealand, wrote a short article in the *International Herald Tribune* on 'The way out is to get out,' arguing that the military option on 'War on Terror' in Afghanistan (and elsewhere) was a grave mistake. He said it overlooks the critical fact that this approach is no longer part of a solution, but part of the problem.

After the removal of the Taliban, American and International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) troops were welcomed as liberators, but they have now overstayed their welcome.

Lafraie suggests that the best way out of the situation in Afghanistan is to withdraw Western troops as soon as possible and replace them with a well-planned and comprehensive solution such as the formation of a Muslim international peace-keeping force under UN command, a strong focus on training the Afghan national army and police, a new intra-Afghan dialogue, a fresh focus on human development and curtailing interference by neighbours.

In all corners of the globe, people are crying for a 'sustainable peace.' This is never sustained by a military approach or by the dominance of superpowers over small countries. With advanced technology wars can easily be won. But sustaining peace is much more difficult and needs a more comprehensive solution.

Sixty-one years ago, on 6 August 1945, humankind experienced the first 'weapon of mass destruction' when the United States Air Force dropped an atomic bomb over the city of Hiroshima, Japan. Three days later, Nagasaki suffered the same fate.

The toll of human life brought about by the twin bombings is simply beyond comprehension, with an estimated 80,000 casualties in Hiroshima and some 70,000 in Nagasaki. By the end of 1945, it was estimated that the death toll in both cities had reached 214,000 because of the bombings and their aftereffects. Because of this, the Empire of Japan surrendered unconditionally to the United States, thus ending the Second World War in the Pacific theater.

The conclusion of the long and cruel armed conflict was a welcome development to the war-weary peoples of Asia, but was at the expense of those innocent Japanese noncombatants who may

also have opposed the aggression and imperial policies of their government.

The debate continues on the ethical and moral issues surrounding the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Such debates may never reach a conclusion, but for the Christian Conference of Asia one thing is crystal clear—CCA is unwavering in its stand in denouncing war and other forms and instruments of oppression, armed or otherwise, against humankind, which is created in the image of God.

As an expression of Christian unity and ecumenism in Asia, the CCA is committed to its mission of preaching the gospel of peace to bring about unity, harmony and understanding among peoples of diverse creeds, cultures, nationalities and political beliefs in this continent.

The sociopolitical situation today is not that far from what it was more than six decades ago. Powerful and prosperous nations still take advantage of weaker neighbors. Racial prejudice still prevails, giving rise to conflicts in many parts of Asia. There is a race for military supremacy in East Asia, South Asia and the Middle East, while the basic necessities and social services of the populace are relegated to the background.

The Asian continent is hurting and its peoples are suffering because of conflicts and other forms of oppression, injustice and neglect.

Given this, the body of Christ in Asia—the Christian and ecumenical community—is faced with the enormous task of peacebuilding in the midst of a troubled world. And as always, our peacebuilding ministry should not be content with just putting an end to armed conflicts, oppression and injustice, but in eradicating their root causes—hatred, greed, prejudice, intolerance and other attributes contrary to the will of God.

We can achieve this by teaching and preaching the gospel of peace and love in our spheres of influence, just as the Lord Jesus Christ did. As churches, ecumenical councils and Christian organisations we should strengthen our peacebuilding ministry to make them comprehensive, all-encompassing and sustainable. Let the bitter memories of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, World War 2 and the war on terror always remind us of our unending quest for *shalom*, an enduring peace-based justice.

—Prawate Khid-arn



Cover: 'Moving Forward with the Holy Spirit in the People's Struggle for Peace', by Sawai Chinapong

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# CCA Welcomed to Chiang Mai

Welcome ceremony and thanksgiving service for the Christian Conference of Asia



Over 300 attended the welcome ceremony and thanksgiving service hosted by the Church of Christ in Thailand and Payap University at the university chapel to welcome CCA to Thailand

Another historical milestone in the life of Christian Conference of Asia occurred when around 300 dignitaries representing churches, local government, non-governmental organisations and various Church of Christ in Thailand units and institutions, plus international diplomats and people from other faiths—Buddhist and Muslim—and friends of CCA took part in a welcome ceremony and thanksgiving service. This was jointly hosted by the Church of Christ in Thailand and Payap University on 28 August 2006 at the Henry Luce Chapel at Payap University.

Rev. Dr Pradit Tagerngrandsarit, the president of Payap University, welcomed delegates, saying, 'Shifting CCA from Hong Kong to Chiang Mai is not an accident. Rather it's God's plan.' After the twelfth CCA General Assembly approved the move in April 2005, the local task force in Thailand immediately began legalising the CCA Foundation,



Rev. Dr Pradit Tagerngrandsarit welcoming people to the ceremony (above) and Dr Prawate Khid-arn, CCA general secretary (right)



which was officially approved in November the same year. The university council welcomed CCA, providing the second floor of the old main library as a temporary office for two and a half years or until CCA moves to its new ecumenical centre.

In his meditation message, Rev. Dr Sint Kimhachandra, general secretary of CCT, delivered a message, 'Perceiving Differences,' based on John 6:1-15. 'In carrying on an authentic ministry, we have to imitate Jesus' holistic ways and approach, considering people with different cultures, faith, experiences and needs.'

Symbolising intercultural and interfaith unity, four persons presented symbols of welcome.

'I really enjoyed the service. It was really meaningful, especially when people from different backgrounds offered soil, water wind and fire as symbols of the sharing of people from different backgrounds,' one participant commented.

Dr Prawate Khid-arn, CCA general secretary, affirmed God's calling in the life and work of CCA to pursue peace, justice and a sustainable society. 'To raise a prophetic voice requires serious engagement in the new context of the people. CCA and churches are called to speak out in a way that we could never speak out alone, but with common understanding and cooperation with sisters and brothers of other faith,' he said.

Rev. Dr Kimhachandra and Dr Pradit then cut the ribbon and welcomed dignitaries to the CCA office and a fellowship reception.



Scenes from the thanksgiving service



Rev. Dr Sint Kimhachandra, general secretary of CCT, delivers the message



Visitors inspect the new CCA office

# Sharing Our Hope for Peace

CATS V held in Hong Kong

While Christianity is known for its optimistic view of having an answer to every problem in a suffering world, such assumed optimism does not always hold water

**F**our Asian theologians expounded the theme, 'Sharing Hope for a New World', of the Fifth Congress of Asian Theologians (CATS V) and three scholars from other faiths shared the hope of their communities on 21–25 August at the Divinity School of Chung Chi College in the Chinese University of Hong Kong.

## The shape and content of hope

Speaking on the congress theme, Archie C.C. Lee, Old Testament professor at CUHK, declared that while Christianity is known for its optimistic view of having an answer to every problem in a suffering world, such assumed optimism does not always hold water. 'More often than not, the shape and content of our hope does not match the socio-political reality we encounter in our present world. We may comfort ourselves with the notion that in Christ we have already encountered the new reality and entered the new world, and we are only to wait for it in faith and hopeful anticipation. Ironically, some of the destructive forces to our world order come from religious communities, of which Christianity is one of the key players. Instead of sharing hope, most of the time it is the institutional religion and its fervent believers, armed with exclusive "truth-claims" and certain types of fundamentalist positions that eventually shatter the basic human hope of millions, bringing deep despair and atrocities to human lives,' Lee stated.

'In order to really establish a ground for sharing hope for a new world, we should critically engage the diversities and ambiguities of the rich traditions of religious pluralism. We need to develop an understanding mind and "discerning heart" that can appreciate the divine activities in human history, and hopefully disregard the boundaries created by institutional religions, by political

segregative agendas and cultural discriminative measures. After all, is not our belief that our God transcends all these boundaries?'

Lee added that 'the powerful prophetic voices of the Bible and the various non-biblical resources on utopian imagination from our respective cultures should be upheld and shared. We must open up our minds and let the outcries and aspirations of our people stretch our imagination and inform our social actions.'

## Hopelessness

Anna May, also an Old Testament professor, from the Myanmar Institute of Theology, situated her sharing of hope in the context of hopelessness in Myanmar and the Bible. The laments of the Karen people, who continue to be marginalised, and of the Burmese people longing for freedom reflect deep despair, frustration and hopelessness. Yet, for Anna May, the Bible offers some rays of illumination even out of the despair and hopelessness of the situation. She finds some parallels in the story of Naomi and Ruth, where human caring and loyalty brings restored life and hope. God's faithfulness may not be expressed directly but it is evident in the way people act towards each other. The role of the caring community therefore is a manifestation of the hope for the vulnerable, suffering, and marginalised.

Looking at people's laments through the story of Jeremiah, Anna May affirmed that 'God is not isolated from the pain of the people. God weeps with the people and identifies with the suffering and anguish of the people.' But when people are too deep in their sorrow and anger against God because of hopelessness and frustration, they may not easily recognise God's presence with them. Jeremiah gives a reminder that God's last word is not doom and destruction. Beyond the exile is the promise of a return to their homeland, a hopeful message for Burmese people, especially the political refugees and displaced people. Finally,

Archie Lee  
(photos by Yangrae Son)



Anna May drew hope from Jesus of Nazareth—the suffering one who is in solidarity with the people without hope. ‘The resurrection hope informs the way I live and act and empowers our people to continue their witness to their faith in their community,’ she said.

### The hope approach to reality

Focusing on sharing hope in the struggles of marginalised communities, Clemens Mendonca, a Catholic nun who directs the Institute for the Study of Religion in Pune, India, stated that hope that belongs to the realm of the invisible ‘requires purity of heart which enables one to see what is normally not visible.’ Today’s world is constructed on the model and values of power, where reason is the sole arbiter of what is right and wrong, and which places reliance on human capability alone. But people with hope go beyond reason. Their sense of hope is responsible for their ability to listen and understand, making space for others. This hope-approach to reality is built on purity of the heart that leads to understanding, compassion, contemplation, receptivity, harmony and love. She narrated several stories of voiceless, illiterate women coming from marginalised communities but displaying exceptional courage and determination to live in the face of human tragedies and disasters, exhibiting solidarity with other down-trodden people and seeking to bring about transformation in society. It is these people from the so-called backward communities or marginalised groups that are the harbingers of hope to many in Asia, she pointed out.

Clemens attributed the work of these women (although no-one is a Christian) to the Holy Spirit of God as they gather the broken threads of humanity to weave a harmonious pattern of dignified living. ‘Any movement towards goodness, truth, beauty, peace, justice, healing, wholeness and well-being of others is from the Holy Spirit, the giver of hope to humanity. It is the Spirit that directs us towards liberation/freedom.’ So while the Spirit of God is the giver of hope, the recipients are those who are open to listen to the Spirit and act accordingly. ‘We are not the ones who are giving these marginalised communities hope. It is they who are inspiring us and instilling hope in our moments of disappointments. We are sharing in their hope,’ she pointed out.

### Hope and solidarity

Lester Edwin Ruiz, originally from the Philippines and now teaching at the New York Theological

Seminary, spoke of hope in the context of diaspora, empire and solidarity. Using the experience of the Filipino diaspora, Lester described it as encompassing immigration, migration and exile (which includes overseas contract workers, political exiles, undocumented or documented people, overstaying tourists and regular immigrants) under conditions that range from voluntary to coercive to oppressive. He noted that discourses of struggle and hope also have to be in the context of post-9/11 and the ongoing US empire—including the complexity of causes that led to it and the resulting nihilistic responses, including justifications for homeland security and the current Christian crusade against global terrorism. In view of all this, ‘solidarity as a creature of hospitality becomes fundamentally important for struggle and hope.’ Solidarity should not be wrongly understood as ‘solidity’, which means being the same, identical, unified with the other.

### Participants

The fifth congress gathered a total of seventy-four Asian theologians, Bible scholars, clergy and lay, religious educators and theological students. Of this number, forty-six were males and twenty-eight females. They came from Australia, Tonga, China, Hong Kong, Singapore, India, Indonesia, Japan, Korea, Myanmar, the Philippines, Sri Lanka, Thailand, the United Kingdom and the United States.

An interfaith panel brought together Xue Yu (Chinese Buddhism, Hong Kong), Irfan Abubakar (Islam, Indonesia) and Parichart Suwanbubbha (Theravada Buddhism, Thailand) to share on ‘Communities of Living Faiths Sharing Hope for a New World.’ One Hindu speaker from India was not able to come.

### Hope and Buddhism

Comparing religion to a drug, Xue Yu said religion has a double function—for conflict and violence and for peace and harmony. The followers of religion need to make an effort for peace by eliminating violence. Properly implemented, he said, some



Anna May



Clemens Mendonca



Lester Edwin Ruiz

Properly implemented, some Buddhist doctrines can provide solutions to the conflicts between religions

Buddhist doctrines can provide solutions to the conflicts between religions. These include a change of mind, by eliminating self-righteousness, causality, which explains existence and the interdependence of beings, and non-self, which can nullify the dichotomy between self and others.

According to Parichart Suwanbubbha, Theravada Buddhism confirms the competence of human beings to make their own effort to attain the highest goal.

Thus, the content of hope in Buddhism is derived from the actions of human beings. Hope results from the activities of socially engaged Buddhists and the preferable Buddhist communities offering dharma healing, community healing and natural healing in response to hopeless situations. Some of the hopeful and liberating teachings are seeing everything as it is, interconnectedness, social engagement and dialogue.

### Hope and Islam

Using some analyses and studies on the growth of Islamic extremism, Irfan Abubakar pointed to circumstances such as the US-led war on terrorism and economic globalisation, religious and political brainwashing of people and the lack of better opportunities and options for poor youth in rural areas. He described his hope as a Muslim through the image of 'a more just world order' that is driven by moral and spiritual motives rather than political motives. In this new world order, it is not just the state but the whole of society that must play a role, especially civil society organisations with religious bases. This new world order supports social justice initiatives for all of the world's citizens wherever they live, regardless of existing differences in race, culture and religion.



Irfan Abubakar, Parichart Suwanbubbha, Yangrae Son (moderator), and Xue Yu on the interfaith panel

### Women's forum

A one-day women's forum gathered twenty-eight women theologians, seminary educators, pastors and religious. This forum was held in order to provide women participants a space to share their struggles, pain and gain in the usually male-dominated field of theological education and ministry. The forum included sharing of stories and experiences, listening to discussion starters from four women participants and small-group discussions. The discussion starters were given by Rose Wu of Hong Kong, Hisako Kinukawa of Japan, Monica Melanchthon of India and Teresita de la Cruz Ong-oy of the Philippines. During the congress proper the women made a creative presentation on what transpired at the forum. The twenty-eight women constituted 38 per cent of the total number of participants.

### Interest groups

Several discipline groups met for professional update in their respective fields and for sharing of papers on the theme from their perspectives. The discipline groups included contextual theologies, biblical studies, religion and gender, religious education, Christian ethics and history, mission/ecumenism/homiletics and liturgics. Issue groups were also held to discuss the theme in relation to clusters of issues such as globalisation, migration, poverty and hope and religion and science.

### Biblical studies society

Immediately following the congress, the Society of Asian Biblical Studies was inaugurated at the Divinity School of Chung Chi College. This new society is 'a baby that has come of age' resulting from the Biblical studies discipline group that has been meeting at the various sessions of CATS.

### Continuation committee

The congress elected the following as members of the Continuation Committee of CATS VI: Anna May Say Pa (Myanmar) and Heup Young Kim (Korea) as comoderators, and Yangrae Son (Australia), Hannah Chen (Taiwan), Kiyoshi Seko (Japan) and Limuel Equina (Philippines) as members-at-large. Other members, by virtue of their offices in the CATS founding bodies are Sr Clemens Mendonca (FABC-OEIA), Samson Prabhakar (BTE-SSC/SATHRI), Sientje Merentek-Abram (ATESEA), A. Wati Longchar (CCA-WCC ETE) and Hope Antone (CCA-FMU). PTCA is still to name their representative.

—Hope S. Antone



# Changing Mindsets

## Asian Ecumenical Course builds communities of peace

I am from a very staunch Methodist family. We believe that if we are born Methodist, we must die a Methodist. However, during the 1980s some members of our church formed an independent church. Once I visited their church. There, amazingly, I was touched by the Lord. I prayed and rejoiced in the Spirit. This experience gave me a new understanding of praise and prayer. However, once I clapped in my Methodist church, and an older person stopped me forcefully. I was surprised how mere clapping could harm his feelings.

When I was in seminary I had many experiences that made me more ecumenical. Once I visited the Lutheran church. I also shared the communion there. It was a strange experience that they took wine from one cup, whereas we Methodists use small cups. I felt like a frog under a coconut shell and this challenged me to visit different churches to learn more. Meanwhile I met some people visiting drug addicts and street people. The service they were providing was without any religious priorities. They themselves were from different denominations. I saw their ecumenical sharing. Some brought honey, some provided medicines and others brought food. Everyone offered what they could offer. This spirit opened my mind. I believe being together we can do more for God's mission.

—Edward Devadason

On 7–26 August 2006 a group of twenty second-line church leaders, eleven female and nine male, came together at Crystal Spring House, Chiang Mai, Thailand, for the Asian Ecumenical Course. They came from Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Korea, Malaysia, Myanmar, Pakistan, the Philippines and Taiwan. They came with their own experiences of what it means to be ecumenical. Like Edward, everyone had a chance to tell their story to start with.

From there they were ready to be a learning community, with Rev. Kwok Nai Wang of Hong Kong as their dean.

It was a learning that was not only cerebral but also touching the heart and challenging for actions for change, not only personal but interpersonal or collective as well, not only about humanity but also inclusive of creation, not only among us Christians but also with other faiths—this time with Buddhists. They learned from each other and their resource persons, but they also learned from the communities out there. During those twenty days in Chiang Mai, they were a caring, learning community strengthened by worship and Bible studies.

The program was designed as *input* in the morning, *output* in the afternoon and *reflection* in the evening. The input included shibashi, morning worship, Bible study and sharing/interactive lectures from resource persons on the theme 'Building Communities of Peace'. The output in the afternoon included team meetings and workshops. The team meetings were to develop a caring community as well as to prepare for worship responsibilities while the workshops were for the sharing of country reports on issues and ecumenical response and exposure reports. Two workshop sessions were devoted to connecting local issues with regional and global issues. Then there was personal writing of action plans and report writing. The reflection included the 'Dean's Hour', vespers and personal reading and reflection.

This year, it was agreed by the AEC leadership team that AEC's focus would be on the role of CCA in the ecumenical movement on the theme, 'Building Communities of Peace for All'. First there was an introduction to CCA at the new CCA office, followed by a session on the history of the ecumenical movement, both shared by Dr Prawate Khid-arn. Then the respective CCA program area executive secretaries (Dr Hope Antone, Dr Wati Longchar and Rev. Josef Widyatmadja for Faith, Mission and Unity, Ms Chang Chung Chih and Ms Cora Tabing-Reyes for EGY, and Mr Tony Waworuntu for JID) gave input on helping build communities of peace through what they are doing. Dr Hope An-

The Asian Ecumenical Course was a learning that was not only cerebral but also touching the heart and challenging for actions for change, not only personal but interpersonal or collective as well, not only about humanity but also inclusive of creation, not only among us Christians but also with other faiths



### Interfaith experience on the issue of HIV/AIDS

tone and Dr Wati Longchar also led in morning Bible studies on the biblical bases of ecumenism, mission and gender justice. In the words of Rev. Kwok, 'Nobody can do the job of sharing CCA's work better than the staff.' Among the ten resource persons, only Dr Huang Po Ho, Dr Mark Tamthai and Rev. Kwok are not full-time staff of CCA.

Dr Huang Po Ho led two Bible studies based on Luke 10:25–37—'A Challenge of Being Neighbour'. He said that a real challenge regarding the question of neighbourhood is to reflect on how to be someone's neighbour rather than to identify our neighbours by asking who they are. The other Bible study was based on Micah 4:1–4—'Peacemaking in a Violent World'. The two Bible studies were aimed to help in doing theological reflection after the workshop on 'Analysis of Regional and Global Context', which Huang Po Ho facilitated.

Kwok Nai Wang,  
AEC dean



Dr Mark Tamthai, director for the Study of Religion and Culture of Payap University, gave an introduction to the Thai context. Among other things he explained how in Thai culture, rooted in the past, each person was measured according to age, education and bloodline, and a person's *pu-dee*, or behaviour. While there have been changes brought about by modernisation, it has not been easy to eradicate the hierarchical valuing of people and the resulting social relationships, which are important to understand in relation to human rights and working for peace in the southern part of Thailand.

Rev. Kwok Nai Wang, as dean, made the design for this year's AEC and took his mentoring role in a very caring and disciplined way, like a 'mother', as Lee Young Mi of Korea said. He encouraged the participants to look for 'signs of hope' amidst the current realities. He facilitated participatory Bible studies based on John 13–17 for five days during the last week, giving guidelines and some structure for the study. Drawing from his deep and wide ecumenical experiences, among other things, Rev. Kwok shared ten tips on 'How to Build a Community':

- Have a mindset change—from a closed mind to an open mind.
- Go from acts of charity to social change. Acts of charity are good but not enough.
- Be comprehensive. See things from different perspectives as widely as possible.
- Stand on the side of the poor and powerless. Follow Jesus' example.
- Be vigilant and critical of the rich and powerful. Abuse of power is the root of oppression and destroys relationships.
- Love conquers all. Sacrificial love is the ultimate reality.
- Have a compassionate heart. This changes people's lives. Com-*passion* means together-suffering. It means suffering with.
- Start with one's self and develop:
  - a cruciform lifestyle. Jesus said, 'Whoever wants to follow me must deny one's self.'
  - integrity. Don't say things you cannot do.
  - utter seriousness. Engage and act. Develop internal discipline.
- Be persistent. Don't give up easily. If you don't give up, a small thing can happen.
- Be responsible to God and for the people. In the midst of difficulties, we grow.

The group had two ecumenical encounters or exposure experiences, each for two days. Exposure is an opportunity to leave the meeting room and

interact with people who are deeply involved in efforts to build peaceful and just communities. It is a learning methodology that maximises the use of all senses and allows realities to be learnt from the perspective of the people. The first exposure concerns were:

- an interfaith encounter with Buddhist monks at Kheun Pak Temple, Praw District, Chiang Mai, where participants aimed to understand the monks' way of life and work and reflect on what this encounter meant for building communities of peace for all,
- ministry on HIV/AIDS with the Church of Christ in Thailand AIDS Ministry (CAM), Sampantawong Church, Hang Chat, Lam-pang province, where participants learnt, through exposure, from the ministry of CAM about the issue of HIV/AIDS, especially the home/community-based approach, encountered people living with HIV/AIDS and reflected on what this ministry means to building communities of peace for all,
- women's issues, with International Justice Mission (IJM), New Life Centre (NLC) and Empower, learning from women the issues they are facing in Thailand, their analysis of the sociopolitical, economic, cultural and religious factors affecting these issues and how women are struggling to overcome violence against women and children in order to have justice, freedom and equality,
- sustainable development in an agricultural community, with the Institute for a Sustainable Agriculture Community (ISAC), where participants learnt from exposure in a farming community the underlying values of sustainable development for a community of women and men and for the environment, about the challenges farming communities in Thailand are facing and how they are meeting these challenges to build communities of peace.

The second exposure was at the Mae Sot province at the Thai-Burma border, visiting the Mae La Refugee Camp, Mae Tao Clinic and internally displaced people. They also visited Huay Nam Khun Karen Baptist Church and met with the children and youth who are studying under the program of this church.

After doing individual action plans and writing reports to their respective sending organisations, there was time for evaluation.

—Corazon Tabing-Reyes



Naw Say Klo receiving her certificate from Prawate Khid-arn and Kwok Nai Wang

The whole three weeks of learning was different from what was expected. What I expected was a lecture-type seminar where we would just listen, take notes etc., but this experience was different. Living here, the shibashi, the worship, the workshop etc., were new ways of living and life. I have become healthier ... Now I know that justice should come with peace—that we should struggle, fight even. Not quite peaceful, but work hard for it. It was worthwhile to come. Thanks to Cora, Kwok, CCA! I learned a lot!

A community of peace was built here. I will extend this kind of community in my home country in order to continue to build communities of peace there, so that those communities in turn are enabled to build even more communities of peace for all. 'How wonderful it is, how pleasant for God's people to live together in harmony!'

Truly when people live in God's harmony, blessing falls on all and life is there in all its fullness.



AEC participants

# Rerouting Mission and Ecumenism in Asia

URM consultation looks at challenges to the current situation

**A** CCA-URM consultation took place in the Beverly Hotel, Chennai, in South India and twenty-nine participants from India, Bangladesh, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Indonesia and Korea took part. There were fifteen major presentations on various themes and issues. Apart from biblical-theological reflections on ecumenism in Asia during morning devotions and Bible studies, the consultation deliberated on five major areas:

- *The history and contemporary Asian geopolitics, sociocultural contexts and ecumenism*—The impact of the global empire and market culture on the ecumenical movement and especially on the toiling community was discussed at length. This panel was led by Dr Ninan Koshy, Dr O.L. Snaitang and Dr Jan Sihar Aritonang.
- *Rethinking ecumenism in the context of religious pluralities, a new partnership paradigm with mission agencies and people's-centred ecumenism*—Bishop Kumara Illangasinghe, Bishop D.K. Sahu and Dr Kim Yong-Bock spoke on this issue. The danger of an NGO-isation of the ecumenical movement and reducing the role of regional ecumenical



## People's Perspective

**T**his study project on rerouting mission and ecumenism in Asia is the continuation of the previous study project on rerouting mission in Asia from people's perspective. The present study focuses on 'ecumenism' from people's perspective. CCA-URM plans to organise three major consultations in South Asia, Southeast Asia and Northeast Asia, with a view to contribute a new dimension on the ecumenical movement specifically from people's perspective.

This study process assumes significance in the light of forthcoming celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of CCA in 2007 and of the 100 years celebration of the first World Mission Conference in Edinburgh, UK, in 2010. The objectives of this study are:

- to promote Asian ecumenism from the perspective of people in pain and in struggle,
- to bring wider dialogue on Asian ecumenism in the context of globalisation,
- to reflect on the fifty-year journey of CCA in Asia (1957–2007),
- to give a critical view on institutional- and development-sponsored ecumenism.

movement to mere development agencies of the West was noted very seriously.

- *Mission and ecumenism*—experience from people's perspective. Dr Evangeline spoke from women's perspective, Dr Arthur Jaya-

kumar spoke from subaltern perspective and Dr Felix Sugirtharaj spoke from a URM perspective. It was noted that the present practice of ecumenism is far away from the people. It is no longer a voice of the people, but simply an agent of the powerful of the West.

- Three panelists spoke on the issues and challenges to the ecumenical movement in the future. Dr Marina Behera spoke on the role of theological education in rerouting mission and ecumenism. Rev. Keerthisiri Fernando spoke on the role of regional and national ecumenical movements, underlining that the primary goal of the ecumenical movement should be to act and serve as a prophetic role for justice, peace and democracy. Mr P.C. Jena and Mr Kingsly Pereira shared stories of their involvement against anti-people's development.
- In the light of the panel presentations and discussion, Dr M.P. Joseph gave a scholarly summary of 'Asian Ecumenism beyond Parapat and Edinburgh'. He underscored

that rerouting involves total rejection of the enslaved faith to the empire, prophetic mission in favour of God's reign and discernment and rerouting as commitment and faith affirmation.

Three important concerns were noted for CCA and churches:

- The importance of setting up a 'study commission' on the changing global geopolitical scenario, especially to study the the impact of global empire. Together with ecumenical partners in Latin America and Africa, the CCA can facilitate this study process to locate and provide new directions for the ecumenical movement in the present context.
- The present and future health of the ecumenical movement lies on ecumenical and ministerial formation. The present theological and ministerial formation is in crisis. Instead of serving the people, it has become an agent of Western power expansion. The rerouting of mission and ecumenism in Asia will not be possible without transforming the ecumenical formation program. A study project needs to be initiated on the role of theological education in rerouting mission and ecumenism.
- Overdependence on Western mission partners and agencies is not a healthy sign for the ecumenical movement. A consultation on 'people's resource in Asia' is urgently needed to explore the financial, cultural, personal and marketing (sharing) resources for strengthening ecumenical movement in the present time.

—Josef P. Vidyamadja and  
A. Wati Longchar

## CCA's New Home in Chiang Mai

CCA officially moved to its new home in Chiang Mai on 1 July 2006.

This day is memorable in CCA history. The first day of July is also the anniversary of another handover, that of Hong Kong to China in 1997. It was a day of strange torrential rain and flash floods in Hong Kong, especially at the CCA centre. All CCA residents had to be evacuated. This event exposed the vulnerability of the CCA site, and its subsequent high maintenance costs, which was one of the reasons for CCA moving to Chiang Mai.

For the CCA family, especially the executive staff and family members, the move is another challenge both to individual lives and in the ecumenical journey. It means changed living conditions and a new life style. Compared to Hong Kong, Chiang Mai is a small city, with a population of only 300,000 in the municipality. Public transportation and other facilities are greatly different.

Language is another difficulty for most of the foreign staff, as not many people speak 'Thinglish' (English with Thai accent).

But the staff are settling in well, thanks to the warm welcome of the people (and weather) of Chiang Mai.



# Visit to Korean Youth

Chang Chung Chih, joint executive secretary of CCA's program area for Ecumenical Formation, Gender Justice and Youth Empowerment, recently visited Korea. Her aims were to get to know the present situation of the youth movement in Korea, to strengthen the relationship with local youth movements, to share the main concerns of CCA Youth and to strategise activities for revitalising the youth ecumenical movement. Here is the report of her visit:

In this visitation to Korean youth, I was warmly welcomed from the first day I arrived. During my six-day stay, I had the chance to talk with the general secretary of the National Council of Churches in Korea, Rev. Dr Paik Do Woong, who expressed his high expectation of the young leaders in Korea. In addition I also met the general secretary of the Presbyterian Church in the Republic of Korea, Rev. Yoon Kil Soo, who strongly supports the youth movement and supported my request to get a youth delegation in the PROK general assembly.

I met with the main Christian youth movements in Korea, the Ecumenical Youth Council in Korea (EYCK), the Presbyterian Church of Korea Youth (PCK Youth), the Presbyterian Church in the Republic of Korea Youth (PROK Youth) and the Korean Methodist Church Youth (MYFK). I listened to accounts of their difficulties and challenges of being in the youth ecumenical movement.

The situation of young people in Korea is similar to other youth all over the world. Korean youth are not interested in the ecumenical movement. Their

lives are rife with so-called 'individualism' and 'commercialism'.

The Korean youth were quite strong in 1970s to the 1990s. Those young people are now leaders of society and churches. However I was saddened to hear that church leaders support the youth movement now only in a limited way. When church leaders expect their young people to be active by 'themselves' it is like an owner who feeds a horse with just a little bit of grass but wants it to run fast!

The main concerns in the Korean youth movement are peace and sustaining the life and development of the youth ecumenical movement and youth ministry.

Young people are often considered as weak, powerless and not a part of the decision-making process. This makes young people hesitant to ask for more. As well, senior church leaders are not willing to give space and support for young people's participation, which disappoints young people's passion for the ecumenical movement. This weakness shows in the youth movement itself. New strategies are not forthcoming from Korean youth. To be Korean youth in the ecumenical movement means having a lot of expectations from the senior friends, which is a burden for them. They have to be creative in order to be a part of the ecumenical movement, to draw the attention of other youth and to work closely with Korean church leaders and senior friends in the ecumenical movement.

Future plans and cooperation among the Korean youth ecumenical movement are:

- to keep working together closely under the theme of peace,
- to nurture young people for ecumenical leadership,
- to communicate with church leaders and senior friends for the development of the youth ecumenical movement.

CCA Youth needs to speak out for Korean youth and to talk with church leaders about revitalising the role of youth.

Discussions with the general secretary of Presbyterian Church of Korea Youth, Lee Sun Ae (left)



# Five Years after 9/11

## People's security threatened by global violence

**F**ive years after 11 September 2001 and the so-called 'war on terror', the world has become more terrorised and killings and violence have become people's daily bread. After the US attack on Afghanistan and Iraq, the US identified some countries as the 'axis of evil'. All this has worsened insecurity in Asia. With the US-led war on terrorism, US hegemony remains the same as it was in the Cold War era, if not worse.

The threat to people's security in Asia continues to be felt, due to political, ideological, religious and ethnic conflicts in various places. This includes the ongoing conflict between Taiwan and China, with its deep-rooted issues of sovereignty and self-determination. Insurgency, violence and poverty in many places have resulted in increased migration and internal displacement of people, as well as in the number of refugees, both economic and political.

The US intervention in South Asia and South-east Asia poses a serious security dilemma, not only for the major regional powers, i.e. China and Japan, but also for secondary powers such as India, Pakistan, South Korea and Indonesia. While the US has kept the so-called 'One China Policy', it has also said that if China were to take over Taiwan with force then the US would stand to protect Taiwan. This is not without US economic interests, for as long as the tensions are high, Taiwan's desire to be well protected and have a modern defence system also remains high, and hence the demand for arms from the US. So a change in the balance of power between China and Taiwan could destabilise the entire region. Peace and stability largely depend on the balance of power and the construction of a region-wide framework of cooperation to diffuse violence and conflict.

The US has been putting some pressure on Japan to have an increased military role. Following the 1996 redefinition of the US-Japan security alliance, a new military arrangement, the 'US-Japan Defence Cooperation Guidelines' was made in 1997. This obligates Japan to mobilise its public and private resources, personnel, facilities, services and military to join American military operations in 'areas surrounding Japan'. With this redefini-

tion, the Japanese ruling groups are now freeing the postwar Japanese state from its constitutional constraints, changing the pacifist clause from a self-defence status to a fully fledged war-capable state with a large army deployable overseas. It is now serving in Afghanistan and East Timor under the label of the UN peacekeeping forces. North Korea was specifically mentioned by the designers of this arrangement as a 'clear and present danger' that will 'have important influence on Japan's security'. A military conflict in the Taiwan Straits could be a possible trigger for US-Japan joint military action though the Japanese and US governments quibbled on this point considering China's strong reaction.

Whatever the North Korean motives were, Kim Jong Il has raised the stakes in nuclear bargaining to unprecedented heights. By forcefully stressing that his government will not disarm unilaterally without reciprocal threat reduction and strategic cooperation on the part of the United States, Kim has dared Washington to come down to Pyongyang and take his arms away through either negotiation or force.

Aside from people's security, the peoples of Asia face other issues of human security, e.g. food security, job security and income security. Since human security does not address the system of global exercise of violence by the US military policy, integrating human security with people's security means a comprehensive security of the people as individuals and as people's collectives. People's security and human security are both concerned about the whole of life.

Since the beginning of the century, the people of the earth have been threatened with death and destruction under the banner of the war on terror. The atrocities committed against Afghanistan and Iraq revealed the true nature of the global empire, which has taken arbitrary, unilateral military actions.

The global empire's obvious purpose is to expand its territorial borders in pursuit of regional hegemony and its control of oil as an economic resource, consolidating the interests of the neoliberal global market. The wars are also a new form of reli-

The threat to people's security in Asia has been ongoing, due to political, ideological, religious and ethnic conflicts

We live in a highly threatened world, a world rife with fear, suspicion, anger, hostility and inequality

gious crusade, justified through religious language and theological claims.

The US is developing new weapons of mass destruction and generating high-tech and nuclear weapons. This, along with strategies for cyber warfare and the unrestrained use of nuclear weapons, including a nuclear first strike, is seriously eroding the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and disregarding the fundamental prohibition against nuclear first strikes.

The war on terror has led to a series of draconian laws and legally sanctioned repressive measures in the US and other countries that effectively condone torture, arbitrary detention and deprivation of liberty, summary deportations, extraordinary rendition and violations of a wide range of other political and civil rights. This has effectively undermined both practice and principles of human rights and rule of law.

The imperial project requires access to the world's natural resources of oil, natural gas, minerals, water and forest resources. Empire is based on the appropriation of riches from dominated countries for the benefit of the power centre, even if this means going to war or destabilising legitimately elected governments. Instruments such as the World Bank and other international financial mechanisms are used to 'liberalise' resource-extraction policies for the absolute benefit of large transnational corporations serving the empire, with minimal benefits to the resource-endowed nations.

From rural to urban areas, from poor to emerging economies in the South, from countries of the South to countries of the North, migration has become a common trend. The number of international migrants increased to more than 175 million in 2005, according to the International Organisation for Migration. Today, one in fifty people are living outside their home countries, while an estimated 25 million have been forcibly displaced within their own countries. As globalisation is leading to freer movement of capital, goods and services, walls are going up to limit the movement of people across borders.

Human rights violations continue to be a reality in Asia. In the Philippines, many people, including church workers, pastors and journalists have been killed, disappeared, harassed or threatened by the state for their activism or advocacy for human rights and justice. Conflicts between various groups continue to take place in such countries as Sri Lanka, Pakistan, India and Indonesia. After September 11 the threat of political religion and

religious violence has become more real. In countries such as Malaysia and Indonesia the church as a minority community has to respond to growing pressures for the formation of an Islamic state or the curtailment of constitutional provisions for religious freedom. Public discourse on matters relating to Islam has become highly sensitive. In Indonesia and Pakistan many churches have been subject to physical threat

We live in a highly threatened world, a world rife with fear, suspicion, anger, hostility and inequality. Some ironic realities facing us today are:

- The world spends more than US\$1.3 trillion each year on military budgets—half by the US alone—yet 10 per cent of this would ensure the essentials of life to everyone in the world.
- To satisfy the entire world's sanitation and food requirements would cost \$13 billion, hardly as much as what the people of the US and Europe spend each year on perfume.
- Thirty million people a year die of hunger and 800 million suffer from chronic malnutrition. Yet there is sufficient food available to provide each of the earth's inhabitants with at least 2,700 calories a day.
- More than 300,000 are currently serving as child soldiers around the world. Many are less than ten years old.
- Ten million children under the age of five die each year, the majority of them from preventable diseases and malnutrition.
- 1.1 billion people have no access to safe water and 2.4 billion are without adequate sanitation.

Many shout peace when there is no peace. They give false hopes that things are improving through political promises, development programs that do not address the roots of violence and conflict and through economic structures that cannot produce the benefits promised. There are leaders who not only affirm these false hopes, but with beautifully painted arguments make the false peace look plausible and probable. Whatever needs to be beautified with whitewash is not built on a foundation of justice. In reality, we do not build peace, but rather we build justice, and once justice exists in our economic, political and social relationships, peace can and will emerge.

In the original Hebrew and Greek of the Bible the words for justice are the same as those rendered as 'righteousness'. Justice had primarily to do with conduct in relation to others, especially with regards to the rights of others. In a larger sense



justice is not only giving to others their rights, but involves the active duty of establishing their rights. Justpeace is, therefore, a peace that emerges as the injustices of the world are transformed and rights are restored for all people. This peace goes beyond simple treaties or contracts. It goes beyond programs that simply help people live a bit more comfortably within systems and structures that are oppressive and unjust. It recognises the history, culture and complexity of a conflict and it tries to address each of those creatively and courageously. Justpeace takes into consideration all forms of conflict and injustice, including economic violence, political violence, social violence, cultural violence, gender violence and ethnic violence. To create a justpeace these injustices must be transformed. To build justpeace, we must have movements that

are rooted deeply in the marginalised communities, addressing the issues of these communities and providing means of participation for all. It is not only a movement of protest, but a movement of transformation—building counter-institutions, systems and structures from the bottom up.

Suffering does not know boundaries of religion, gender, nationality or ethnicity. In suffering, people come together for they know that their survival depends on unity. As people have committed to building justpeace, we too must come together without concern for religious affiliation, gender, nationality or ethnicity. Our coming together with the marginalised regardless of our differences reflects our vision of a future global community of justpeace—the reign of God.

—Tony Waworuntu

## Difficult Time

A pastoral letter on the situation in Sri Lanka from the heads of churches

**W**e, the heads of churches, write to all our beloved scattered all over the country at this very difficult time in the history of our nation. As you know, many in our country are weeping for the loss of the lives of their family members and friends. There are many who are internally displaced. Numerous stories are heard of brutality, fear, uncertainty and helplessness from all parts of the country. There seems to be some growing hatred in some parts of the country. All these stir up pain and agony in the hearts of people.

We thank God for those of you who responded to the needs of the people and engaged in pastoral care. There is much more to be done to support people of all communities who are displaced and grieving. We encourage all of you to continue your pastoral ministry in creative ways through prayer, preaching, presence and assistance wherever possible.

While our pastoral ministry continues we encourage you to also engage in a prophetic ministry to voice the alternative gospel view in order to bring sanity and build bridges towards reconciliation. We need to reflect on biblical principles and on a kingdom spirituality in order to make a positive, informed response and bring healing to all. We are reminded of the words of our Lord, 'Blessed are the peacemakers for they shall be called the children of God.' This catastrophe could be considered a testing time for our churches and communities as to whether we are true disciples of Christ and whether we live according to biblical teachings.

May we also kindly request you to be in close contact with other Christian groups and persons of other faiths in order to build social trust and friendship. We firmly believe that building relationships of trust can pave way to make friends with 'enemies'.

You are assured of our prayers.

*Rev. Kingsley Perera, president, Baptist Sangamaya, and chairperson, NCC*

*Rev. C.N. Jansz, president, Dutch Reformed Church*

*Rt Rev. Kumara Illangasinghe, Bishop of Kurunagala*

*Rt Rev. Duleep de Chickera, Bishop of Colombo*

*Rev. Ebenezer Joseph, president, Methodist Church*

*Rev. K. Piyadasa, moderator, Presbyterian Church*

*Rev. S.C. Arnold, moderators commissary, Jaffna Diocese of the Church of South India*

*Col. Lalzamlova, territorial commander, Salvation Army*

*Rev. Dr Jayasiri T. Peiris, general secretary, NCC*

# Peace a Priority for Youth

Young people cooperating in North East Asia

A preparatory meeting for the North East Asia Cooperation Program 2007–2009 for youth was held on 31 July to 2 August 2006 in the Takadanobaba Taiwanese Church, Tokyo, Japan. The main objectives of the meeting were to set up a youth cooperation team for North East Asia, to determine future plans and to prepare for the North East Asia Peace Consultation 2007. The participants were youth secretaries/coordinators from Hong Kong, Japan, Korea and Taiwan and from CCA Youth.

## The Situation of Young People's Lives

The participants shared that young people tend not to be involved in movements nowadays, especially social movements, which shows that young people are paying less attention to social issues and have become more concerned with individualism and materialism. At the same time young people are often considered as a 'human resource', not just in society but also in churches. Too many activities mean young people lose interest in joining more groups. Many youth movements are unaware of other movements let alone join with them. For example, the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan Youth has limited communication with other church youth ministry groups in the country.

There is also less communication between church youth movements and Christian student groups.

Participants: Hidefumi Kitani (NCCJ), Chang Chung Chih (CCA), Itan Pavavalon (PCT), Lee Doo Hee (EYCK) and Won Hoi Wing (HKCC)



## The Need to Establish a Network

There is an absence of young leadership. Churches also make few opportunities open to youth. The participants agreed that there was a need for building up a network among subregional youth movements. Hopefully this network could help CCA Youth to bring the ecumenical movement to the local level.

## NEA Co-Team

It was agreed to set up the North East Asia subregional cooperation team, named 'NEA Co-Team'. Co-team members will meet once a year, and have regular joint program for specific issues. The co-team will be fully supported by CCA Youth and encouraged to be a mechanism for dialogue between CCA Youth and national church youth movements. This new mechanism would enable working together from a regional to national to local levels. The main focus for the NEA Co-Team will be on peace and the programs to carry out together will be the North East Asia Peace Consultation 2007, national peace campaigns and a peace issues related exposure.

## North East Asia Peace Consultation 2007

CCA has organised a North East Asia Peace Consultation (NEAPC) since 1997. Since the NEA Co-Team took 'peace' as the main focus of its cooperation program, and, for the coming three years, a specific focus on 'demilitarisation', NEAPC will bring youth leaders from Hong Kong, Korea, Japan and Taiwan together to discuss the effects of militarisation and what role young Christians and the churches can play towards addressing its effects. NEAPC 2007 will be held on 16–22 May 2007 in Taiwan. NEAPC 2007 will be a chance to bring together youth from the North East Asia countries for deliberation and exploration of peace and conflict issues and issues of demilitarisation and economic neocolonisation in the subregion under the influence of globalisation, to provide a platform for a network on peace issues in the area and to give an opportunity for interlinking with other subregions in Asia.

—Chang Chung Chih

# Common Prayer for Peace and Reunification of the Korean Peninsula

God of peace,  
We give thanks for your loving hands caring for every life and  
all of history.

God,  
We recovered our freedom after thirty-six years of Japanese  
occupation, and since then, another sixty-one years have  
passed.  
This is not a short time; but still there are voices around us  
defending the old structure of division.  
Nonetheless, this land abounds with dreams for reunification.

‘The North and the South have agreed to join our strength as  
a sovereign and responsible people, and to independently  
solve the problem of national reunification.’  
On that day of 15 June 2000 when news of the North-South  
Joint Declaration was broadcast,  
We could not believe our own ears and eyes.

God,  
Who will dare obstruct your plans?  
Though the sharp teeth of barbed-wire fences remain along  
the truce line,  
Coming and going over those fences  
Are the hearts of the divided families,  
With their sharing of wisdom for life together,  
And their care and concern for each other.  
These have laid down the base for our future peaceful  
community.

God,  
We thank you for giving us new opportunities.  
Rather than clinging to outdated pride in our past leadership  
role for reunification and peace,  
May we, the churches of North and South, embrace a greater  
value:  
Our hope in a new day filled with strength and vitality, a new  
day we will build together.

We believe  
That the peaceful economic and cultural community we  
dream of

Will result from the hope that binds our hearts together.  
However fierce may be the suffering that we face,  
However fearsome may be the storms that try us,  
We steadfastly believe in the amazing plan of God, who  
has brought us out of brokenness and ruin and into a  
relationship of trust and understanding.

God of love,  
Now we are awakened to the knowledge  
That though we have been divided for the past sixty years,  
there was never any division in you;  
That though we doubted, there was always the reality of  
oneness in you.  
Therefore, in you we already have experienced reunification.

We pray our reunification will be strong and beautiful.  
We pray it will set aright our history of pain and suffering,  
Bring unity to our nation, and offer hope to the whole world.

May the train departing from this land, pass through the  
Asian and European continents and finally reach the  
ocean at the far end of the western land.  
May the fire-pillar of peace starting from this land, shine  
a light on the continents to the utmost reaches of the  
western land.  
Grant that our reunification will be hope for the world.

God,  
In you, once again we dream a great dream.  
The dream you dreamed on the cross in that ancient time,  
The great dream of every person and all of history abiding in  
you,  
Is our dream also.

With hope for the peace of this land and the unity of its  
people,  
We pray in the name of our Lord, Jesus Christ, Amen.

This common prayer was jointly written by the National  
Council of Churches in Korea (NCCK), based in Seoul, and  
the Korean Christian Federation (KCF), based in Pyongyang

# A Desire for Justice

Families and friends of human rights victims in the Philippines launch 'Hustisya'

We grieve but we are not without hope for we continue the journey to our vision of peace with justice

The worsening state of human rights violations in the Philippines has compelled Filipinos to be in solidarity with one another. It has not discouraged the families and loved ones of the victims of human rights violations. Instead, the families and friends of these victims have concretised their solidarity by organising 'Hustisya' (meaning 'justice').

In the Cordillera region of Northern Luzon, Hustisya was launched at the Resurrection Cathedral of the Episcopal Church of the Philippines in Baguio City on 14 September 2006. The launch consisted of a forum on the current human rights situation in the Philippines and an ecumenical memorial service to remember the church workers and peace advocates who have been killed serving the poor and struggling peoples in the country. Hustisya was also launched at the national level in Manila on 15 September.

At the memorial service in Baguio, a homily was given by Rev. David Tabooy, rector of the Resurrection Cathedral, on the biblical passage, 'Whoever desires to come after me, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me.' (Mark 8:34) The cross is a reminder of the wrongs that need to be corrected in society and the greatest crime of the church is its silence in the face of such wrongs, he stated.

Chandu Claver (right) with three widows of peace activists



Remembering those who died serving the poor and vulnerable peoples, Tabooy said their death is the ultimate obedience to Christ's call. 'We grieve but we are not without hope for we continue the journey to our vision of peace with justice. The beauty of being God's people is that we are together in this journey and we are assured that we will

## A Wish for Everyone

by 'Courage-People's Victory'

I wish upon my heart  
That good wishes may come true  
And my wish is:

I wish that life has adventures for me  
There is no life without challenges  
I wish that everyone would find  
Their own destiny with  
The journey of life.

To see everyone trying  
Trying to find their talents  
Not giving up whatever happens.

Everyone lives with joy and courage.

In all my wishes,  
I want to know the truth and have  
Justice to every person  
Even plants and animals.  
Also that to be loved, taken care of, and  
Have rights.

('Courage-People's Victory' is the symbolic name of Andrea Nikole Manegdeg, the 10-year-old daughter of the murdered lay worker of the Rural Missionaries of the Philippines, Jose 'Pepe' Manegdeg. This poem was read during the memorial service at the launching of Hustisya in Baguio City on 14 September.)

overcome because the God of peace and justice is with us.'

The memorial service also included testimonies by families and friends of some of the victims.

Dr Constancio 'Chandu' Claver, convener of Hustisya, spoke of his miraculous survival of an ambush of his family by masked men who until now have not been identified. He said he survived because Alyce (his wife) covered him with her body, thus taking all the thirty-eight bullets. 'We hope that Alyce will be the last. But this will not happen if we do not put our hope into action. I hope that all will continue the work and that all our efforts will bear fruit,' he said.

To date a total of 750 peace advocates and human rights activists (including church workers) have been killed since Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo assumed the presidency in 2001. These are farm-

ers, workers, media practitioners, church workers, activists, indigenous peoples, teachers, youth, students and doctors—all victims of a state policy to silence the legitimate people's dissent against the oppressive laws and policies of the government. Many more cases of involuntary disappearances and abductions (147 cases as of June 2006) continue to be reported.

Human rights groups have documented the involvement of police, military and paramilitary groups behind these human rights violations, thus showing a pattern of state involvement. While President Arroyo has promised to solve these cases due to mounting international pressure, nothing has been done about the so-called counter insurgency program, which targets as 'the enemy' anyone advancing the people's interests even in the democratic space granted by the constitution.

A total of 750 peace advocates and human rights activists (including church workers) have been killed in the Philippines since 2001

## Hustisya Unity Statement: 'O Day of Wrath, O Day of Mourning'

**W**e come together in common grief, united in our outrage against the unabated senseless violence that has claimed the lives of decent men and women. This carnage has come to our doorsteps and we have been stalked by people of deadly intentions who are apparently protected by the state. We have been harassed, received death threats, shot at and lost loved ones to assassins' bullets. We have walked through the valley of death and our lives will never be the same again for etched in our souls are scars which may take forever to heal.

Yet we rise from our devastation. We may have lived through this horror but we shall not allow ourselves to be paralysed by fear. These senseless killings are intended to silence people who are conscientious peace and justice advocates and civil libertarians who believe that society can flourish best in an atmosphere of genuine freedom and democracy. We remain steadfast in our conviction that truth and justice will prevail in the end.

We are appalled no end by the cheap regard for human life and we take to task President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, who has chosen to bestow accolades on generals and military men who are known violators of human rights instead of mobilising the forces under her command to stop the killings. This regime honours butchers and hunts down civilians trying to lead normal lives. What crimes had our loved ones committed to deserve their gruesome fate? There are already 749 recorded deaths of unarmed civilians by suspected military personnel since Macapagal-Arroyo came to power and the number is increasing almost everyday.

Justice's 'terrible swift sword' is tempered in the fiery billows of hell. Similarly, we steel ourselves by staring fear in the face, by developing the courage to speak the truth and to do what is right, especially in the face of falsehood and repression. Genuine peace is attained through struggle and through the collective action of noble people working for justice. We, therefore, enjoin everybody to join the campaign to put an end to the government's 'total war policy' and to stop the political bloodbath. The lives of unarmed civilians and innocent people have been unnecessarily snuffed out under this reign of terror and the killings must stop now!

Stop the Killings! Respect Human Rights!

—by survivors, families, relatives and friends of victims of political killings

# Cancel Dictator Debts!

The global struggle to eliminate illegitimate debts imposed on the poor

**T**he International Conference on the Cancellation of Illegitimate Debts was attended by 150 representatives from Southern and Northern social movements and civil society organisations from fifteen countries of Asia, Africa, Europe and the Americas. Also present were parliamentarians and government officials joining the people's efforts against the yoke of enslaving debt. The conference was jointly organised last May in Jakarta, Indonesia, by Reality of Aid-Asia Pacific, the IBON Foundation, the International NGO Forum on Indonesian Development (INFID) and the Pacific Asia Resource Center (PARC). Cosponsoring were Norwegian Church Aid (NCA), European Network on Debt and Development (Eurodad), African Network on Debt and Development (Afrodad), Christian Conference of Asia Urban Rural Mission and Kairos Canada.

The conference participants aimed to deepen their understanding of the extent and impact of illegitimate, odious and dictator debts on the poor peoples of Southern countries. They arrived each bringing the experience of their respective movements and organisations in the struggle for the cancellation of these debts, and left inspired by the determination and tenacity they had seen in each

others' national and international campaigns. The global struggle against debt has already achieved so much and there is a resolve to continue, build up and intensify resistance to this.

The people of the South have suffered trillions of dollars in debt and debt servicing for decades, which has been among the greatest burdens causing their continued and deepening economic backwardness and social underdevelopment. Yet even as hundreds of billions of dollars are paid every year to creditor banks and organisations in the world's wealthiest countries these debts are not going away and indeed are growing ever larger—reaching US\$2.6 trillion as of 2004. There are national governments that spend up to half of their budgets just on debt servicing. This has caused untold hunger, poverty, misery and deprivation for generations of peoples across Asia, Africa and Latin America.

The usurious Paris Club governments, organisations and international financial institutions are unmindful of all this and only concerned that repayments continue whatever the social, cultural, ecological and economic devastation wrought. Even the recent supposed initiatives at addressing the debt problem such as the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) and Multilateral Debt Relief Initiatives (MDRI) have so far unfortunately been merely token or insufficient. At the same time there are so few positive developments such as the creditor Norwegian government's acknowledging the existence of illegitimate debt.

Debt servicing is happening at the cost of the exploitation of people, the denial of their basic rights to social and public services, the plunder of Southern agricultural, forest and mineral resources and the destruction of sovereignty. The debt is even being used to impose destructive and one-sided policies of neoliberal globalisation. This grotesque situation must be ended or the great majority of the world's people who are poor will be driven ever deeper into debt and poverty. Northern governments are challenged to put so much Millennium Development Goals (MDG) and Financing for Development rhetoric into genuine development practice.

Illegitimate debts have caused untold hunger, poverty, misery and deprivation for generations of peoples across Asia, Africa and Latin America (photo by Mlenny)



# Debt

So much of Southern debt is patently onerous, imbued with corruption, forced by creditors, used for projects that have been harmful to the people and environment, a result of self-serving Northern economic policies or borrowing to repay debt. *The people repudiate this illegitimate debt and we call for its absolute and unconditional cancellation.*

We are particularly appalled at debt willfully given by Northern creditors to the world's worst dictatorships, including Marcos, Suharto, Pinochet, Duvalier, Mobutu, the apartheid regimes, juntas and many others. This debt of some US\$451 billion accumulated over the 1950–1996 period not only merely enriched these regimes and their Northern collaborators but directly resulted in the killing, disappearance, torture and abuse of human rights of hundreds of thousands of people. *We call for the immediate cancellation of dictator debt, which is the most brazen and odious debt endured by Southern peoples.*

The peoples of the South have long been repaying debt that should not be paid, as it is illegitimate and odious. This long-standing injustice cannot be forgotten and must be rectified. *We call for the return of these payments on illegitimate and dictator debt.*

Southern debt and debt servicing have grown to such monstrous proportions and taken such different forms that we do not even know the true extent and depths of the problem. Northern creditors have used this to obscure the extent of their culpability and the vastness of the damage. *We call for immediate public and transparent audits of Southern debt in support of our campaign for the cancellation of illegitimate and dictator debt.*

We recognise that our historic fight against burdensome and unjust debts lies most of all in the strength of our social movements and civil society organisations even as we link with progressive parliamentarians and government officials. We are committed to contributing to the ongoing campaigns and initiatives happening across the South and the North.

Towards the overall struggle to cancel all illegitimate and dictator debt the participants at the conference resolved to do the following:

- Deepen understanding of the burden of debt and its impacts on Southern countries. This includes:
  - conducting citizen's audits quantifying the debt, reviewing the circumstances in which they were contracted and assessing their impact,
  - developing case studies of the most blatant examples of illegitimate and dictator debt to concretise the issue and aid campaigning.
- Build the capacity of our campaigners on the debt issue. This includes:
  - basic information, handbooks and trainings,
  - case studies on the successful Nigeria and Argentina initiatives.
- Conduct widespread and sustained grassroots education campaigns for greater awareness building and mass mobilisations. These may include parliamentary resolutions and legislation calling for cancellation, official debt audits and changes in burdensome national debt policies.
- Develop further national cooperation and networking among social movements, civil society, parliamentarians, professionals, civil servants, academics and other anti-debt advocates.
- Develop further North-South and South-South cooperation, networking and solidarity among social movements, civil society and parliamentarians.

The burden of debt is indeed one of the most urgent issues of our time. The campaign to cancel odious and illegitimate debt is just the start of overall efforts to cancel the debt and end foreign domination of Southern economies.

Not only have Southern peoples suffered this burden for so long but they are also facing the consequences of neoliberal policies of trade and investment liberalisation, privatisation and deregulation imposed by the world's handful of big powers.

The struggle to cancel the debt would just be a part of the struggles to be able to realise a more just and humane society for all people.

—Josef P. Widyatmadja

The burden of debt is one of the most urgent issues of our time. The campaign to cancel odious and illegitimate debt is just the start of overall efforts to cancel debt and end foreign domination of Southern economies

# International AIDS Conference, Toronto

Reflections of a Christian from Asia

**T**wenty-five years ago the first reports of a strange disease that defied medical classification began circulating all over the world. We now know much more about the virus, and yet even today we are faced with a world ravaged by this disease. At AIDS 2004 in Bangkok, leaders and stakeholders had expressed disappointment at their own inaction in keeping their word and in fighting the virus. AIDS 2006, conducted by the International AIDS Conference (IAC), whose theme was 'Time to Deliver', was keen to evaluate the declarations and new commitments made in and prior to Bangkok, and also to foster an environment of scientific inquiry, forthright dialogue, collective action and greater accountability among all parties.

## Ecumenical Pre-conference

The Ecumenical Pre-conference, organised by the Ecumenical Advocacy Alliance and held in the days preceding the IAC, enabled the Christian delegates to come to know one another in a more intimate atmosphere and to evaluate and discuss the ecumenical response to HIV and AIDS. Hence, when the IAC actually began, the friendships struck up

during the pre-conference helped delegates to find time for acquaintances and network, in spite of the sea of humanity present. To truly participate in the Toronto AIDS Conference one had to do a lot of walking. Almost 26,000 people trudged between the North and South Towers, and escalated floors between the sessions, the poster exhibition hall, the skills-building workshops and the global village, while digesting the matter that came out of them.

## Some Issues at the Conference

The conference was politically correct in that it did target youth and women, though many asked if the youth were visible in the throng, or if their voice was heard. There was, however, a definite focus on women and gender. From the opening plenary where a fiery Louise Binder, an HIV+ lawyer from Canada made an impassioned plea on behalf of her sisters, the increasing inability of governments to look after the health and safety of adolescent girls and women in their care became critical topics of workshops and plenary sessions. It is also true that the IAC made biology, epidemiology, social sciences and policy mutually exclusive disciplinary divisions instead of creating alliances between them. Again, the time-trusted and universally accepted method of prevention, 'ABC', took a beating—with some experts stating the 'A'—abstinence—is simply not feasible—for example it is not compatible with most African cultures where sex is so bound into traditions and practices that the moralistic injunction of one donor government cannot prevent or terminate it. It was also true that many women who had remained faithful ('B') were becoming infected because of their husbands'/partners' infidelity. And the use—or non-use—of the ubiquitous condom ('C') was hotly debated. There were strong arguments and heavy debates about routine testing for HIV. An issue that came up from the pre-conference was the 'acceptance' shown to MSMs and same-sex partners who showed up at some of the

International AIDS Vigil at Yonge-Dundas Square (photos courtesy of AIDS 2006, © Lise Beaudry)





sessions. The disparity between the 'evangelical' and 'liberal' positions is now coming up for discussion in the evaluation. Clearly there is scope for more meetings among Christians to debate these issues.

### Recent Scientific Investigations

Latest scientific investigations brought up several issues, e.g. focus on a new class of antiviral agent—the integrase inhibitors, the positive aspects of male circumcision (for prevention) showing up in field tests, vaccines and microbicide gels in the final clinical trial stages that look as though they could be a breakthrough, an extremely drug-resistant strain of TB and pre- and post-exposure prophylaxis with ARTs. The most recent findings did bring hope and succour to those infected and affected.

### The Barefoot Brigade versus Technology

There was the usual amalgam of grassroots workers and grassroots solutions juxtaposed among newer frontiers and breakthroughs in scientific and medical technology, and the two did not necessarily mix. The pharmaceutical companies (who tried to portray a low profile, after the fiasco at Doha) and other big agencies kept proposing their very clear 'technology laden' agendas and solutions in the conference and its satellites. (Many 'lured' delegates to seminars pushing their viewpoint to other venues in Toronto by offering freebies and food.) They ran against the 'barefoot brigade', those working with the harsh realities of Africa, Asia, Eastern Europe and Latin America, who had to be content to put forward their ideas in the fringe areas of the conference, through poster presentations, and through activities at the global village, which may be why the village was a bedlam of frenetic activity at all times, with music, drama and impassioned speeches in one glorious cacophony. Yet these people were extremely lucid and clear-eyed in their forecast. According to them, the 'global remedies', in spite of the tall claims of techies, would take three to ten years to become available at the grassroots level. Even then, they would find reality issues and local responses such as religion, culture, society, poverty, social behaviours etc. affecting, even undermining, their implementation. They thus suggested alternatives.

### Where Was Africa?

The very clear losers at IAC 2006 were the African nations. No African representatives spoke at



Ruth Nduati (Kenya) discusses the range of issues facing women and children living with HIV/AIDS

the opening plenary and non-Africans were often nominated to speak on behalf of Africa. Anand Grover, of the Lawyers Collective, Mumbai, one of the few Asians to speak at a plenary was given a standing ovation for pointing this out. Was it the South African Government's shameful handling of the AIDS epidemic that brought about such a harsh response from the IAC? The low profile given to many nations in Africa and Latin America is reverberating across the internet even now as people start to evaluate the conference.

### And What of Asia?

It is unfortunate that as the cradle of world religions, and the home to the subcontinent vying with South Africa for the dubious distinction of having the highest HIV population in the world—Asia—was not adequately represented. There were some horror stories circulating of Asians who made long and difficult journeys to embassies/high commissions to get Canadian visas who were (sometimes rudely) rejected. High costs and the prohibitive distance may have added to the woes of would-be Asian delegates, always dependent on donor agencies to become visible and heard at international forums. Some members of CCA's recently formed HIV/AIDS Strategic Task Force, however, were present: Ms Elijah Fung of Hong Kong, Dr Sunita Abraham from India, and the well-known face of WCC's Health and Healing Program, Dr Manoj Kurien. Although many Asian faces could be seen among the delegates, very few actually got on the panels or podiums. Among the powerful voices of positive people that emanated from Asia, one was that of Ms Rachel Ong, from Singapore. Articulate and effective, her words were hard-hitting reminders to the rest of the delegates how much more had to be done for PLWAs. Sev-



At the global village

eral delegates from other Asian countries also attended and did make impacts by their presence and interventions, but they were far too few. The Western nations—donors and delegates—seemed more keen to examine the growing shadow of the virus on Eastern Europe—and even China—rather than see the issues as reflected in other (less prosperous) Asian nations. Was this due to economic or political reasons?

Asia's Interfaith Response

For the same reasons, the interfaith presence was muted. In spite of the recently initiated 'Southeast Asia Buddhist Monk Network', the Buddhist monks delegation was evidently smaller than at Bangkok. The monks who did come, from Laos, Vietnam, Cambodia, Myanmar and Thailand, managed to hold a preliminary pan-Buddhist meeting. They were much sought after by the media for their evident piety and colourful robes. Again, unlike at Bangkok, the Muslim Pre-conference failed to get off the ground, for the same reasons. But there were some positive sides too.

The charismatic dynamism of Buddhist leader, Phra Maha Boon Chuey of Thailand, chairperson

UN special envoy Stephen Lewis calls upon the world's leaders to fulfill their commitments



of the Asian Interfaith Network on AIDS (AINA), was very much evident. Another very powerful Asian-origin voice was that of Prof. Farid Esack (who now lectures at Harvard), who spoke on many forums, but also acidly on the negative impact of stereotyping Muslims. It is indeed unfortunate that Dr Vinu Aram (WCRP) and Prof. Akhtarul Wasey (Secretary of the South Asian Inter Religious Council) could not attend and represent the Hindu and Muslim faiths. Mr Abdus Sabur, of Asian Muslim Action Network (AMAN), from Bangladesh, and Ms Bishnu Ghimire, a Hindu activist from Nepal were able to showcase the response of their religions in their respective countries. Ms Kamanee Hapugalle of Sri Lanka was there with her team, in preparation for the 8th International Congress of AIDS in the Asia Pacific (ICAAP) meeting to be held in August 2007 in Colombo. They were also escorting the Sri Lankan Minister of Health. In fact many Asian governments sent their top people.

The Way Ahead

The success of any event usually rests on what happens next. The final speakers at IAC recounted the challenges still unmet, e.g. to empower women, increase availability of drugs, get the G8 nations to fulfil their funding pledges and more doctors/health workers in Africa. Stephen Lewis, in his final speech as the UN special envoy on AIDS, asked, 'What kind of a world do we live in, where the life of an African or Asian child is so much less than that of a Canadian child?' This acknowledged the disparity in the world community's response. The churches of Asia need to have a clearer and concerted voice that tells the world the real situation in our countries and also our responses to them. To enable us to do this, a cohesive policy on HIV and AIDS needs to be formulated, both by CCA and by the national councils of churches in Asia.

The tremendous opportunity thrown up by ICAAP being conducted in our neighbourhood needs to be exploited to the hilt. Asian churches need to showcase their response at ICAAP, and CCA needs to utilise the space provided by the organisers of AINA—the Asian Interfaith Network on AIDS—to spearhead the interfaith sessions there. We have much work to do. 'Time to deliver' has yet to become a reality in the Asian context.

—Philip Kuruvillea

(Fr Philip Kuruvillea is CCA's HIV/AIDS consultant)

# Are Youth the Future or the Present?

Chang Chung Chih reflects on the WCC central committee meeting

**A**re youth the future or the present? The question of youth leadership had a high priority at the World Council of Churches' 9th Assembly in Porto Alegre, Brazil. WCC general secretary Rev. Dr Samuel Kobia's appeal to participants at the Youth Pre-assembly made people take notice that the ecumenical movement lacks youth participation.

Subsequently, on the last day of the WCC central committee meeting in August, a proposal for a youth body was approved. This is a milestone for youth in the ecumenical movement. Youth have been playing an important role in past decades of the movement as propellants. However, youth have for a long time been excluded from decision making bodies and not been heard. The youth body may bring a new mechanism and act as a window of opportunity for youth in the ecumenical movement. In my short time since joining CCA as youth secretary, I have often heard these two questions: Where are our young people? Why is the church not supporting youth? The first question comes from our church leaders, and the second from our young people. Both sides are supposed to join together and work closely for the family of God, but instead are asking a 'causal relation' question. Without the participation of youth or support from the church, a lack of youth leadership will constantly occur.

Participants at the WCC central committee meeting (photo © Peter Williams/WCC)



## Youth Body to Strengthen New Leadership

**T**he new youth body decided at the WCC's 9th Assembly in early 2006 is designed to 'broaden and strengthen' the fellowship in the ecumenical movement by ensuring the 'sustainable and active' involvement of young adults in all levels of the WCC by developing their leadership skills and advocating their broader participation in the council.

Speaking after the decision, the newly appointed moderator of the youth body, Ms Outi Vasko (Orthodox Church of Finland) expressed her enthusiasm for the decision. 'What will be important with this new body is not only to focus on representation, but to enhance the contribution that young people can make in the WCC, in key areas facing the churches and the ecumenical movement.'

The WCC's 9th Assembly, which involved more young people than any previous assembly, decided to create the 'youth body' as a means to promote the development of ecumenical leadership and a more direct participation of young people (aged between 18 and 30 years) in the decision-making and programmatic work of the council.

Three primary objectives of the new youth body were agreed—consultation and mutual accountability with the WCC, networking with the wider ecumenical movement and strengthening ecumenical leadership skills of young ecumenical and church leaders. The body is also expected to assist churches to enable the involvement of young people in their own decision making.

The body, whose name will be decided in the coming months, will consist of twenty-five young adults from among the governing and advisory bodies of the WCC, and active youth leaders nominated by churches and ecumenical organisations from around the world. Young people from a broader constituency than the WCC's membership are also to be represented.

—WCC

# Minjung Theology towards a Second Reformation

by Yim Taesoo

Yim Taesoo shows new ways of reading the Bible and interpretation of Christ in the context of modern life of the churches in Korea and raises critical and constructive prophetic voice against the global empire and globalisation

One of the tasks of CCA is to promote new theological thinking and debate in the Asian context. We are delighted that Prof. Yim Taesoo has added a new chapter to Asian contextual theologies through the publication of this well-researched work on minjung theology.

He says: 'Christianity is a religion of peace. Nevertheless, the Western Christian countries have deformed it into a religion of war, plunder, suppression and exploitation through crusades, colonialism and globalisation.

'The Christian religion is a religion for the minjung. Nevertheless, the Western Christian countries have made Christianity the religion of the ruler, the elite, and the upper-class/caste.

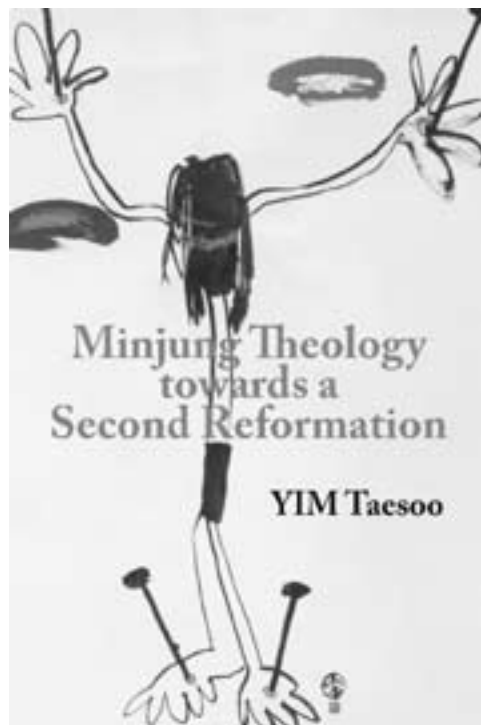
'Christianity is a religion for those who serve each other. Nevertheless, the Western Christian countries have made Christianity a religion for the one being served, a religion for the one who is the master and the ruler.

'Christianity is a religion of love. Nevertheless, the Western Christian countries have made it into a religion of hatred.'

He writes further, 'The Bible is not a book that supports rulers and power' but 'it is the book of liberation.' Jesus Christ comes amidst us in the face of the poor, the ill, the wanderer and the imprisoned. If you want to meet and serve the Lord, go to the weak, the poor, the sick and the oppressed and care for them with all your heart. It is equal to caring for the Lord.'

In Asia we need a theology of people and this work provides a very clear perspective on how Asian theology should be.

Yim Taesoo who has been teaching Old Testament at Hoseo University in Cheonan, South Korea, for more than two decades and also serves as pastor in one of minjung churches in Korea. Since 1993 he has also served as the director of the Institute of Minjung Theology and currently publishes the *Journal of Minjung and Theology*. Since 1984 minjung theology has been his main theme and



he has contributed many articles in several journals on this issue. Some of the articles found in this book have been published in those journals. Therefore, the book is the product of twenty years intense research and it provides a very critical evaluation of the minjung theology developed in Korea in the 1970s and 1980s, especially its understanding of the Bible and Christology. Being born and brought up in a minjung family,

Yim Taesoo brings fresh experience and insights of what and how minjung theology should be today's context.

Having pointed out some problems of the earlier writings, he shows new ways of reading the Bible and interpretation of Christ in the context of modern life of the churches in Korea and raises critical and constructive prophetic voice against the global empire and globalisation.

—A. Wati Longchar

## Masao Takenaka



Dr Masao Takenaka from Japan was well known as an ecumenical guru in Asia. He was greatly appreciated for his support of indigenous arts in Asia, especially through the Asian Christian Art Association, which he

helped to found in 1978. He wrote a number of books relating indigenous culture to the artistic expression of Christian faith and ethics: *The Place Where Gods Dwells*, *Christian Art in Asia*, *Cross and Circle* and *The Bible through Asian Eyes*. As an ecumenical leader in Asia, he was a key figure in the urban industrial movement worldwide.

## Lee Soo-Min



Lee Soo-Min was secretary general of the World Alliance of YMCAs from 1985 to 1991. Prior to that, he served as general secretary of the then Asia Alliance of YMCAs

from 1973 to 1985 and as a secretary of the National Council of YMCAs of Korea from 1953 to 1973. Lee Soo-Min studied at Hankuk Theological College (BD), Konkuk University, College of Liberal Arts (BA), the YMCA Training School in Korea and at Union Theological Seminary, New York (MST). As an ordained minister of the Presbyterian Church in Korea, he served as a chaplain to the Koje High School. He was also a part-time lecturer in community organisation at the Central Theological Seminary and in Christian social ethics at the Methodist Theological College in Seoul. A man of great vision and deep faith, he worked tirelessly on justice and peace issues, bringing new visions, insights and program ideas in the YMCA movement world-wide. While serving as the secretary general of the World Alliance, Lee Soo-Min gave special focus to Christian mission and ecumenical relations, including issues of global concern. He gave outstanding leadership to the strong stance of the World Alliance against apartheid in South Africa. He also gave continued leadership to the

issue of peace with justice in the Middle East with particular focus on Palestine and Israel, based on all United Nations' resolutions.

—Bartholomew Shaha

## Kang Won Yong



Dr Kang Won Yong from Korea was in the presidium of CCA in 1973–1977, together with Dr T.B. Simatupang (Indonesia), Rev. John V. Samuel (Pakistan) and Ms Jurgette Honculada (Philippines). In 1945, Rev. Kang Won Yong established Kyoung Dong Presbyterian Church in Seoul, later described as 'the seedbed of the Presbyterian Church in the Republic of Korea (PROK)', serving as minister there from 1949 to 1986 and as minister emeritus until his death. He served on various committees of PROK and was general secretary of the Korean Student Christian Federation in 1947, president of the National Council of Churches in Korea in 1964 and 1980, a member of the WCC central committee in 1968–1983, president of the Korean Peace Forum and chairperson of the Korean Foundation for Working Together.

## Frank Engel



Rev. Dr Frank Engel died on Wednesday, 12 July. Frank was one of the twentieth century's outstanding ecumenical leaders. Frank was born in Korea, the son of missionary parents. After studying in Australia he became a Presbyterian (and later a Uniting Church) minister. He played a leading role in the Student Christian Movement, in both Australia and New Zealand, then became East Asia Secretary for the WSCF. He served on the Central Committee of the World Council of Churches from 1961 to 1968. In this period he was also much involved with the Christian Conference of Asia. He was a member of CCA's general committee 1970–77 and of the executive 1973–77. During the 1960s Frank was associate general secretary of the Australian Council of Churches, then its general secretary 1969–74. He fought for an end to Australia's discriminatory 'white Australia policy' on immigration, pioneered action for justice for the country's indigenous people and helped open up relations with the post-Vatican II Roman Catholic Church in Australia. He was 94. A great man.

—David Gill

## New Associate General Secretary



Rev. Dr Rienzie Perera has been appointed CCA's new Associate General Secretary for Finance and Relations, commencing 1 October 2006. The appointment was made by the general committee via a recent postal ballot.

Rienzie is no stranger to the ecumenical movement. His first involvement in CCA was in 1977 when he was a youth delegate to the 6th General Assembly in Penang, Malaysia. At that assembly he was elected to the general committee of the CCA for the period 1977–1981. Since then, Rienzie has continued his involvement in the ecumenical movement in various capacities, as resource person for programs and a member of various committees for CCA as well as for the WCC. Rienzie was also the general secretary of the National Christian Council of Sri Lanka in 1993–1998.

Rienzie Perera is also a well-known theologian in the Asian ecumenical scene. He has a PhD from Union Theological Seminary in New York and was a graduate in ecumenism from Bossey. He has written and published many Bible studies and theological reflections. Some of his areas of specialisation include Third World theology, interreligious dialogue, development education and human rights and justice issues.

As a former general secretary of the NCCSL and former research director of the Life and Peace Institute in Sweden, Rienzie also brings with him a wealth of experience in managing and fundraising in the ecumenical movement.

Welcome aboard, Rienzie!

## CCA Turns Fifty

The year 2007 marks the fiftieth anniversary of the founding of the Christian Conference of Asia. The Asian church leaders who met in Prapat, Indonesia, on 17–26 March 1957

created the oldest ecumenical movement in Asia. Asian churches who are members of CCA accept that they belong to one another and are willing increasingly to live a shared life.

Since its inception, CCA has faced many challenges in doing God's mission for social justice, peace and sustainable development in the region. There were times of joy and times of sorrow, times of difficulties and times of celebrations. We all experience these times as we follow in the footsteps of our Lord Jesus Christ. We also realise that the commitment and devotion of CCA leaders in the past have paved the way for a new generation to continue this endless ministry of involvement in the global and Asian contexts. 'He always dwells with us and among us.'

CCA will continue to be God's instrument for bringing love, peace, unity and the fullness of life in the years ahead. The rise of globalisation and free-market societies in Asia calls CCA to become more proactive in its response. Thus, to promote a sense of responsibility for Christian witness and fellowship of churches in Asian society, a dual function—'to serve' and 'to lead' have become the challenging task of CCA.

Activities planned for the fiftieth anniversary celebrations in 2007 include:

- a souvenir booklet to capture some memories as well as visions of the life and work of CCA,
- a VCD/DVD on the work and programs of CCA. This will be a very useful tool to introduce CCA to local congregations within the CCA family,
- celebrations in Parapat, Indonesia, the birthplace of CCA. The theme of the celebration will be a historical and theological reflection of the life and mission of CCA. This seminar will also host art and cultural exposures of local indigenous churches,
- an international symposium on 'Building Communities of Peace for All' to be held in Chiang Mai, Thailand.



## New Bishop

Daniel Thiagarajah, a joint executive secretary of CCA's Faith, Mission and Unity program area from 2000 to 2003, was recently consecrated as the fourth bishop of the Jaffna Diocese (in Sri Lanka) of the Church of South India at a solemn function and service held in the chapel of the CSI Synod Headquarters, Chennai, India, by the Most Rev. Dr B.P. Sugandhar, moderator of the Church of South India. Rev. J. Prabakar Rao was also consecrated bishop of the Northern Karnataka Diocese (KND) on the same day. Both Jaffna and KND had been without bishops for the last eighteen months or so. Bishop Daniel was presented to the moderator by three presbyters of the Jaffna Diocese, who came to India at a short notice.

## Eddy Cahyana

Rev. I Ketut Eddy Cahyana has been the FIM intern with the CCA since July 2006. He comes from the Protestant Christian Church in Bali (GKPB) and will be a part of the CCA community for the next two years. During his internship he will be actively participating in the interfaith dialogue and cooperation programs of CCA. Eddy brings with him vast experience in interfaith dialogue from the Bali Church.

There are many religions that colour the population in Bali—Hinduism, Islam, Buddhism and Christian (Protestant and Catholic). The Protestant Christian Church in Bali is one of many protestant churches based in Bali. It has about 10,000 members spread out in all parts of the island.

In this context, the Protestant Christian Church in Bali (GKPB) needs to network and cooperate with all people from all walks of life in Indonesia. It is not possible to live without cooperating with each other, especially at present when the people are facing the burning issue of *ajeg Bali* ('Bali steady, strengthen').

*Ajeg Bali* are powerful words. It is more than jargon and refers to the Balinese turning back to their ancestor cultures. The Balinese culture is a tradition that is rooted strongly in Hinduism dogma, philosophy and mythology (*I Ngurah Suryawan*). This mixing of cultures and traditions with Bali Hinduism has a strong impact on the lives of the people—socially, politically, economically—providing a kind of gel for coexistence amongst all religions.

Intrafaith and inter faith dialogue and cooperation are urgent needs in the Bali and Indonesian

context in order to face common issues as well as to eliminate problems and conflict that can originate from religious differences.

Eddy hopes that during the time of his internship he can learn more about interfaith dialogue and cooperation in the Asian context. He would like to experience the richness of the diversity of faith in Asia and bring those experiences home with him to Bali.

## An interview with Yu-mi Bae

Yu-mi, a cheerful young woman, aged 26, is pursuing her bachelor's degree in the field of Chinese literature at Kon Kuk University in Seoul. She took up Chinese literature to equip and prepare herself with the language skills required to be able to work as a missionary among the Chinese community in China. However, during the course of her involvement in Bible studies and social activities at Presbyterian Church in the Republic of Korea youth, she came to understand that she could serve the Chinese people who are migrant workers in her own country. Yu-mi then took up an active role in PROK youth and now serves as chair of International Mission Committee of PROK.

Yu-mi will continue as an intern in CCA for the next four months. Shirley Susan interviewed Yu-mi Bae for *CCA News*.

### Can you brief us on the current status of Korean youth today?

Korean society is very competitive. Most youth in Korea are interested in individual success. They are very busy and want to study and earn more and more money today. They are not interested in joining our association or any youth association. The priorities of youth in Korea are different! Polarisation is getting deeper and more serious in the country. Although the youth are aware about polarisation they do not want to participate in the struggle against changing the present system.

The media have made our youth 'blind' today. Economic globalisation and commercialisation have taken over the lives of our youth. They lack a 'right' perspective—eyes to see what is happening around them. But if we can help them with building their perspective, we can definitely see change.

### What are PROK's activities to mobilise youth participation?

We will initiate a forum in October 2006. The forum is composed of youth and leaders of PROK youth and members of local churches. The forum is intended to identify the specific needs of our youth. We will revisit and review the strategies that we have adopted over the past several years. We would like to provide a new and renewed vision for PROK youth, which will celebrate its fiftieth anniversary in 2008.

I also believe we can mobilise youth participation through Bible studies to discuss social, economic and environmental issues that impact Christian youth.

### What are your expectations as an intern at CCA?

I would like to learn more about the CCA youth movement and its structure. I would like to specifically know more about how CCA organises and engages youth in its activities in the ecumenical movement. I would also like gain field experience to know about the situation of youth in other Asian countries.

I am also considering future plans for international ecumenical programs for Korean youth. When I get back to Korea, I will strengthen the activities of our ecumenical movement.

# A Prayer of Thanksgiving

Our gracious and loving God  
We thank you for your faithfulness to us through the years,  
You have provided a home, a shelter and a refuge to the East Asia Christian Conference,  
now the Christian Conference of Asia  
from its beginning up to now.  
You were with our ancestors and predecessors  
throughout the journey from Bangkok to Singapore,  
to the four cities of Chiang Mai, Manila, Osaka and Hong Kong,  
and through sixteen years in Hong Kong.

We thank you for this beautiful shelter at Payap University and in Chiang Mai, Thailand.  
Even if it is our transit home, a home in the meantime, we thank you.  
We thank you for the warm hospitality of the Church of Christ in Thailand and Payap University,  
and other supporting organisations and agencies who have warmly welcomed us  
and helped us to settle down here.

Help us to always remember the movement character of the Christian Conference of Asia  
that we might be ready to journey towards you and with you through your peoples,  
regardless of our differences in ethnicity, religion, culture or language.  
In this pilgrimage of life, we ask that you move ahead of us,  
behind us, beside us, above us, with us and through us  
and especially in this new chapter of the life of this regional ecumenical organisation.

We offer to you any anxiety, fear or uncertainty about the future,  
trusting that you are the God of history as well as of life's mystery.

We, therefore, commit once again our lives in service to you  
and your peoples in Asia.

In Christ's name.

Amen.

This prayer was offered at the Welcome Ceremony and Thanksgiving Service for CCA  
in Chiang Mai, Thailand, on 28 August 2006 by Hope S. Antone