

# *cca*news



**Caring for the Earth**

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# The World That We Care for

Genesis 2:15

**T**he global environmental crisis, especially climate change, is the subject of many international conventions and debates. A red warning light indicating the worsening ecological situation has been turned on.

The UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (UNIPCC) that met in early April 2007 reported that both floods and water shortages are threatening Asia due to climate change. Asia is going to face drastic flooding, acute water shortages and the risk of hunger and disease this century if the present rate of global warming continues. The consequences could be a global loss of 20 to 30 per cent of known species, water shortages for at least one-sixth of the world's people by the century's end and an increase of many millions of people each year affected by flooding from now through to the 2080s.

In the twentieth century sea levels rose between 10 and 20 cm. The UNIPCC predicts that in the twenty-first century the sea level could rise anywhere between 9 and 88 cm. There are many variables—including how much the expected increase in precipitation will add to snow packs and, most importantly, our greenhouse gas emissions over the next decades. What we do know is that even a small amount of sea level rise will have profound negative effects.

Rising sea levels are expected to flood coastal areas and heavily populated megadelta regions in south, east and south-east Asia, and climate change is expected to interfere with the sustainable development of this rapidly urbanising region. East and southeast Asia could enjoy up to 20 per cent greater crop yields, while neighbours in central and south Asia could experience the opposite—up to 30 per cent crop declines. The end balance would be negative, the IPCC said, and would increase the likelihood of hunger.

Disease and mortality are projected to increase from diarrhoeal illness associated with floods and droughts in east, south and southeast Asia, while cholera could increase due to rising coastal water temperatures.

The world has come to another threshold moment. The global community is facing a critical environmental crisis. Human-induced climate change poses a great threat to the common good, especially to the poor and the vulnerable, and to future generations. By reducing the earth's biological diversity, human-induced climate change diminishes God's creation. Therefore, it is our profound obligation as Christians to lead eco-friendly lifestyles. We must take immediate steps to stabilise the climate. This means reducing global emissions of carbon dioxide, the most important greenhouse gas, to below 1990 levels well before the middle of the twenty-first century.

Humans' self-centredness has caused large-scale abuse of creation through advances in science and technology, urbanisa-

tion, industrialisation and globalisation. Protection of the environment is an urgent issue for all of us. In our global community there can no longer be a split between those who advocate industrialisation and those who say the environment is the priority. God created the earth, and we believe that God continues to sustain it. Pope Benedict urged people to 'respect God's creation' while 'focusing on the need of sustainable development'.

The church, guided by its divine responsibility to protect the whole of creation, has already pronounced its role in restoring the environment to its former natural state. 'God saw everything he had made and indeed, it was good ... then the LORD God placed the man in the Garden of Eden to cultivate it and guard it.' (Genesis 1:31, 2:15)

God has demonstrated commitment to creation in the incarnation and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Christ, who 'reconciles all things' (Colossians 1:20) calls his followers to the 'ministry of reconciliation' (2 Corinthians 5:18, 19).

We humans are only a part of God's creation. Therefore we need to work with nature rather than against it. The use of fossil fuels and nuclear energy is destructive to creation. We should move toward the use of renewable energy that God has abundantly given us as we live alongside with creation. In the long term, it is also more economically efficient to use renewable sources.

The destruction of the global atmosphere is a sin against God. True forgiveness is available from God but only after true repentance by the sinner. True repentance requires a conversion of the heart and a transformation of behaviour. Only then can true forgiveness be experienced. Countries with high emissions need a conversion of the heart and demonstrably new behaviour before they seek forgiveness. (WCC Statement to the COP6)

The CCA Environmental Training 2001 called upon churches in Asia to:

- promote eco-theological studies in theological seminaries and churches at all levels,
- increase eco-awareness of the facts of global climate change and its implications,
- set an example through individual and collective actions that reduce greenhouse gas emissions,
- increase demand for technologies and products that produce less emissions of carbon dioxide,
- work with other environmental organizations,
- prepare materials for church groups.

This is a *kairos* moment!

Let us preserve and protect the earth.

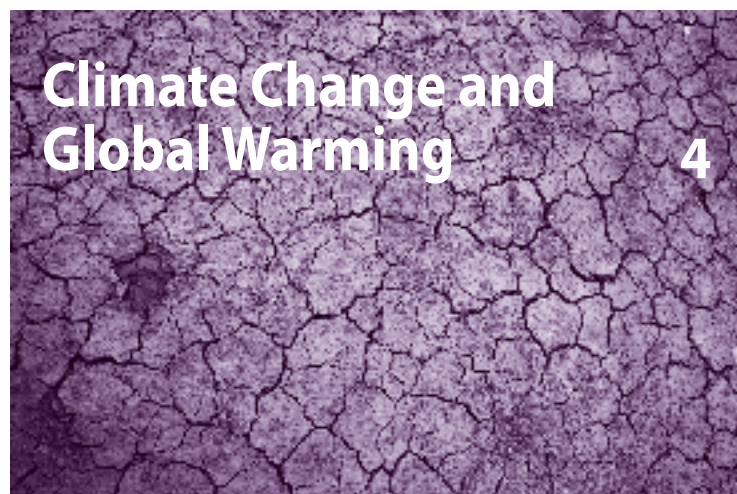
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# Climate Change and Global Warming

Freddy De Alwis gives some basic information to understand the grave implications of what we are doing to the earth

In this article I wish to share some basic facts on climate change and global warming to help those interested in these subjects to work with their local communities and interested groups. This will equip you to equip others to understand the grave implications of these issues and to work out ways and means to become agents of change to save the planet earth from destruction and chaos.

## ■ Global Warming

GLOBAL WARMING refers to an average increase in the earth's temperature, which in turn causes changes in climate. A warmer earth may lead to changes in rainfall patterns, a rise in sea level and a wide range of impacts on plants, wildlife and humans. When scientists talk about the issue of climate change, their concern is about the global warming caused by human activities. According to information provided by scientific research the earth has warmed by about three-quarters of a degree Celsius over the past 100 years. We are unable to say why this has happened and scientists are not able to give exact reasons for this change. It is possible that the earth is getting warmer on its own. But many of the world's leading experts on climate change argue that irresponsible human behaviour and lifestyles, behaviour and lifestyles have contributed immensely to make this change happen.

Also, the four warmest years of the twentieth century took place in the 1990s. Periods of increased heat from the sun may have helped to make the earth warmer. But many of the world's leading climatologists are of the opinion that greenhouse gases (water vapour, carbon dioxide, methane, ozone etc.) released into the air by human action have contributed to a large extent to make the earth become a warmer place.



## ■ Glaciers



MELTING GLACIERS are an area of concern for ecologists. A glacier is a large, slow-moving river of ice. Global warming has meant that many glaciers in the world are now melting and retreating from their earlier positions. For example the glaciers in Montana's Glacier National Park in the US are retreating so much that they are predicted to disappear by 2030. Many scientists see a link between global warming and melting glaciers.

## ■ Rising Sea Level



IF YOU HAVE BUILT A SANDCASTLE on the beach close to the ocean on wet sand you probably know that the sandcastle won't last very long. As soon as the tide comes in the waves will wash the sandcastle away. On seashores around the world two high tides and two low tides occur every day. Since the beginning of the nineteenth century the sea level has been rising, currently by about 3 mm a year. When the sea level rises, the tide goes further up the beach. The sea rises partly because of melting glaciers and ice dissolving into the sea. In addition, warmer temperatures in the sea will make it rise even more, as heat makes water expand. When the ocean expands, it takes up more space.



## ■ Climate Change

CLIMATE is the long-term average of a region's weather events. Climate change represents a change in these long-term weather patterns—warmer or colder temperatures, an increase or decrease in rainfall or snowfalls etc.

## ■ The Greenhouse Effect

THE GREENHOUSE EFFECT is the process in which the emission of infrared radiation by the atmosphere warms a planet's surface, as in

a greenhouse. The various greenhouse gases make the earth warmer by trapping the sun's energy in the atmosphere. The industrial age has contributed immensely to pollute the earth and the air we breathe. Before the industrial age change was slow, almost imperceptible and did not pose a grave danger to the planet. From around the end of the eighteenth century there was a radical change and from the nineteenth century onwards humans started burning

fossil fuels—coal, oil, gas—for industrial processes and the propulsion of vehicles and machinery, causing an enormous discharge of carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>), sulphur dioxide (SO<sub>2</sub>), carbon monoxide (CO), nitrous oxide (N<sub>2</sub>O) and other assorted gases into the atmosphere. The greenhouse effect has caused global warming, which in turn has led to a partial melting of the icecaps and the rise in sea water levels. Consequently many low-lying lands and islands are in danger of disappearing, for example in the Maldives and Bangladesh. Some estimate Bangladesh could lose 17 per cent of its land.

## ■ River Pollution



THE USE OF PESTICIDES and nitrogenous fertilisers is polluting the earth's land, rivers, lakes and sea, harming living things. For example this could reduce the oxygen discharge by phytoplankton, one-celled plants that live at the ocean surface, which produce half of the world's atmospheric oxygen. (This situation is further aggravated by the depletion of the ozone layer reducing available oxygen (see below), and even further aggravated by the reduction of forests and other surface greenery. The pollution of the Ganges River, which flows into the Bay of Bengal, is notorious for its fetid pollution. In the Ganges' 2,510 km course, it supports one of the highest densities of population in the world, flowing through twenty-nine cities and seventy large towns, and receiving over a hundred billion

tonnes of industrial waste and over 9,000 tonnes of pesticide. An immeasurable amount of raw sewage gets into this river. Daily, thousands of half-burnt corpses float on the river. In Europe, the Rhine River is notorious for its industrial pollution. A person trying to bathe in it cannot sink because of the high concentration of dissolved waste and chemicals.

### ■ Ozone Layer

THE DISCHARGE CHLOROFLUOROCARBONS used for refrigeration, air conditioning, perfume sprays etc., rising into the upper atmosphere is destroying the layer of ozone (O<sub>3</sub>) in the stratosphere, which serves as a shield for life against ultraviolet light, which can cause skin cancer.

### ■ Scarcity of Fresh Water



TO ADD TO HUMAN WOES, the earth's supply of fresh water is fast depleting. Currently twenty countries with a population of more than 150 million people have less than 1,000 cubic metres of water annually per capita. On present trends twenty-five nations will be similarly placed by 2050 and the total global population so deprived would rise to 2.5 billion, nearly half the present world population. In Beijing, China, the water table has dropped 37 m in the past forty years. In fifty years, exploitable water resources there will be nil. In addition worldwide water use is expanding rapidly. By the year 2025, it will have increased by 40 per cent since 1950. Meanwhile water availability has declined dramatically. At the World Water Forum held in 2000 in The Hague in the Netherlands it was suggested that the forum facilitate mediation for crossborder water disputes. At least 214 rivers flow through two or more countries. By 2025 there could be a 20 per cent or more increase in demand for fresh water as the population of the world increases. If many of the wars of the twentieth century were about oil, the wars of the twenty-first century could be about water. In southeast Asia tension is rising along the Mekong River. Dam projects in China and Laos, plus water diversion in Thailand radically affect the river's ecological balance and impact Cambodia and Vietnam

downstream. There is also considerable saltwater intrusion in the Mekong delta. In Africa there is severe shortage of fresh water. The future seems very dismal.

### ■ Deforestation

THE WORLD'S FORESTS ARE DECLINING. Deforestation now threatens the developing world (unlike forty-five years ago, when it was in the West). One-fifth of the earth's tropical rainforest disappeared from 1960 to 1990. Estimates of deforestation of tropical forest for the 1990s range from about 55,630 to 120,000 square kilometres each year. At this rate, all tropical forests may be gone by the year 2090. Surprisingly, India plants 4-5 hectares for every one hectare felled. The general consequence of deforestation is the loss of biodiversity through loss of habitat. Forests are also being destroyed by acid rain formed from nitrous oxide and sulphur dioxide. Acid rain also destroys archaeological monuments like the Parthenon and the Taj Mahal. These poisons, emanating from vehicles, are further compounded by lead emissions. Between now and 2030, these emissions will increase fivefold, and the number of motor vehicles will rise over a billion. The reduction of worldwide vegetation reduces photosynthesis and thereby the volume of oxygen produced over land. This reduction is in addition to the reduction of oxygen produced by the biomasses of the sea.

Planting trees is fun and a great way to reduce greenhouse gases. Trees absorb carbon dioxide, a greenhouse gas, from the air.

*Freddy De Alwis is CCA's new joint executive secretary for Justice, International Affairs, Development and Service*



# Faith Principles on Global Warming

## Justice

We need to strive for justice and acknowledge that global warming's impact already falls, and will continue to fall, most heavily on the people around the world who are least able to mitigate the impacts—the poor and vulnerable populations both in developed and in developing countries. The leading industrialised nations have disproportionately contributed to greenhouse gas emissions, so it is incumbent upon them to rectify this injustice. To reach our goal of justice, we need to:

- include mechanisms that mitigate the impacts of global warming, particularly for vulnerable populations,
- prevent further harm to human health and all of God's creation by utilising clean energy sources,
- focus on a fair and equitable distribution of total benefits and costs among people, communities and nations,
- enable those now living in poverty to have both economic independence and stability and to eliminate the devastating impacts that global warming has and will continue to have on those people living in poverty,
- take action now to avoid placing the burden of carbon reduction unduly on our children's children,
- endorse policies that place a high priority on allowing all people to live in God's abundance and with dignity by ensuring that basic human needs and worker justice are not adversely impacted by the effects of global warming or future efforts to address global warming.

## Stewardship

We need to heed the call to be faithful stewards and caretakers of God's creation by limiting the future impacts of global warming on God's earth. To reach our goal of stewardship, we to:

- follow recognised scientific guidelines and recommendations in order to protect all of God's creation and prevent catastrophic damage to God's earth and God's people. Legislation must include comprehensive, mandatory and aggressive emission reductions that aim to limit the increase in earth's temperature to 2°C or less,
- avoid catastrophic global warming, which would devastate God's creation, put more pressure on disaster and relief responses and endanger the future of the planet,
- call on major emitters to take responsibility for their actions and work to significantly reduce their carbon emissions.

## Sustainability

We must ensure that efforts to curb global warming prevent further environmental and societal tragedies. As people of faith we are guided by the value of sustainability. Sustainability requires that we enable biological and social systems that nurture and support life not be depleted or poisoned. To reach our goal of sustainability, we need to:

- maintain God's good creation by preventing policies that place the burden of our lifestyles on one aspect of creation and encouraging policies that sustain and restore vibrant ecosystems with economic justice so that communities of life can flourish for generations to come,
- respond to global warming in a way that reflects the interdependence of all of God's creation,
- support energy sources that are renewable and clean, which avoid destruction of God's creation.

## Sufficiency

In a world of finite resources, for all to have enough requires that those among us who have more than enough will need to address our patterns of acquisition and consumption. We cannot achieve significant reductions in global warming emissions unless we make changes in our lifestyles and particularly in our energy consumption. To support the goal of sufficiency, we need to:

- encourage energy conservation in our homes, our communities and our places of worship,
- encourage energy conservation in national transportation and distribution systems and commercial enterprises,
- encourage governments to lead through research and example in the practice and implementation of energy conservation.

*The ideas presented here are based on a Statement of Principals on Global Warming signed by seventeen religious organisations in the USA. They were submitted to the US Senate Environment and Public Works Senate Committee on 7 June. Episcopal Church presiding bishop Katharine Jefferts Schori joined with other major faith leaders representing Protestant, Catholic and Jewish organisations calling on the US Congress to alleviate the burden on people in poverty by reducing carbon emissions through mandatory climate policy. Jefferts Schori, who is a trained oceanographer, testified on behalf of the National Council of Churches USA.*

# Endowment Fund

## How can you help the work of the Christian Conference of Asia?

It is a disappointment and a challenge to all the constituent members of the CCA family that CCA, after fifty years of existence, is still dependent on partner churches and agencies in Europe and North America to meet 70 per cent of its annual budget

One of the important events that took place at the fiftieth anniversary celebrations in Parapat, Indonesia, was the launching of the Endowment Fund for CCA. The idea of establishing an endowment fund goes back to the Colombo General Assembly, where it was decided to set up an endowment fund with a target of US\$5 million. The purpose of the endowment is to reach the goal of self-reliance as laid down in the constitution.

CCA is an ecumenical organisation established fifty years ago by the churches and the national councils of churches in Asia. This was a bold decision taken by the Asian Christian leaders of that time with a prophetic vision. However, it is a disappointment and a challenge to all the constituent members of the CCA family that CCA, after fifty years of existence, is still dependent on partner churches and agencies in Europe and North America to meet 70 per cent of its annual budget. This dependency calls into question the commitment of Asian churches to the life and vision of CCA. The fact that we cannot sustain and nurture the institution we created and formed and from which we benefit and have benefited is a sign of misplaced priorities, overzealousness in denominationalism and lack of ownership of the ecumenical movement for which previous generations worked untiringly. Finally, it is not merely a question of money or resources. It is a question of spirituality and Christian stewardship.

On the other hand, you may not have heard of the needs of the CCA, and therefore are unaware of the situation. In this jubilee year of the CCA we want to give you or your church an opportunity to take your stewardship seriously and make a contribution towards the Endowment Fund. God has blessed you in many ways and therefore we invite you to share your blessings with others. You can make a contribution to the Endowment Fund in many ways. This could be:

- an offering in memory of a loved one,
- a thank offering,
- a gift offering.

Following are a few areas for which CCA would like to use the funds generated by the Endowment Fund.

- A residential course for a period of one month on peace and conflict transformation rooted and grounded in the liberative spiritualities of Asian religions.
- Scholarships to deserving candidates from least-developed countries (Laos, Vietnam, Cambodia, Bangladesh etc.) to study theology.
- To bring together on a regular basis scholars and practitioners from diverse faith communities and from no faith to draw out the ethical, spiritual, religious, theological and missiological implications on issues related to ecology, global warming and genetic research and share their findings with diverse groups and faith communities in Asia.
- To bring together religious leaders from around the world to create a platform to reflect on critical issues facing the world and to articulate a coherent and a critical voice to challenge the empires, principalities and powers of this world.
- To bring together Asian theologians, peace practitioners and activists to engage in the task of producing theologies that are contextual and relevant for our times.

A certain percentage of the Endowment Fund would be utilised to provide financial support to maintain the CCA structure and program staff.

The Endowment Fund will be administered by a group of trustees appointed by the General Committee, and it will be governed under a constitution.

If you would like to make a contribution towards the Endowment Fund please send your contribution payable to:

Christian Conference of Asia  
 Account name: Christian Conference of Asia  
 Name of bank: Hang Seng Bank  
 Branch: Hankow Road (4 Hankow Road,  
 Kowloon, Hong Kong)  
 Account number: 295-4-709594  
 Swift code: HASEHKHH

If you need further information please contact CCA at the Chiang Mai office in Thailand.

—Rienzie Perera



# New Understandings

Contextual theological training offered to a new batch of Khmer pastors

A second batch of thirty church workers, including women and youth leaders, from the Kampuchea Christian Council finished the first round of a teachers and pastors' training organised by the CCA Faith, Mission and Unity team on 19–24 March 2007 in Phnom Penh, Cambodia. The training is a response to the needs in Cambodia, where leadership of churches largely depends on theological education by extension and short-term leadership training programs conducted by various church-related organisations. Most pastors have no formal theological training and very little awareness of contemporary issues and realities. Many of them are not exposed to new trends in theology, new ways of reading the Bible and ecumenical formation.

Recognising the importance of ecumenical formation and to stimulate them to broaden their mindset from traditional readings of the Bible, which is very much individualistic, other-worldly and exclusive, to a more transformative and inclusive way, this training program was conceived to train sixty ecumenical enablers in Cambodia on Asian contextual theologies. In November 2006 the first batch of thirty church workers completed their first round of training.

The course has been designed to train participants in effective preaching, worship leadership and holistic and contextual reading of the Bible in the context of economic injustice, globalisation, environmental degradation, HIV/AIDS, multireligious issues and gender inequality.

For the second batch of participants the teachers were Dr Gaikwad Roger, Director of Theological Education by Extension of the Senate of Serampore College, India, Dr Donald Messer, director of the Centre for the Church and Global AIDS, USA, and Dr Hope S. Antone and Dr Wati Longchar of CCA FMU.

For most of the participants this training was the first of its kind. One participant said, 'We were never taught to read the Bible this way. Now I understand what it means to read the Bible in the context of contemporary realities. I feel very inadequate to preach having listened to our teachers. I realise that I need more formal training.'

Another participant said, 'This kind of training program should be organised in the provinces. All pastors should have a chance to attend such a training program. We see hope for Cambodia if we preach from the Bible in the way our teachers taught us.'

A participant whose family has been affected by HIV/AIDS said, 'A separate training program needs to be organised on "Reading the Bible in the Context of HIV/AIDS" to help pastors understand the virus and minister to them. Pastors have a crucial role to play in the community and we thank the teachers for helping us to understand how to create a healthy community. We have become more sensitive. But we need more worship materials.'

A woman participant expressed the need for a separate training program on reading the Bible from women's perspective. 'This will help both men and women understand the various forms of cultural discriminations and hopefully change their attitudes towards women and thereby become agents of transformation,' she said.

—Hope S. Antone and Wati Longchar

Responding to the need in Cambodia, where leadership of churches largely depends on theological education by extension and short-term leadership training programs conducted by various church-related organisations



Participants at the teachers and pastors' training in Phnom Penh, Cambodia

# Empowering Women's Leadership

Ecumenical Lecture Series launched in Davao, southern Philippines

One of the ways in which the Christian Conference of Asia tries to reach out to the local constituencies and promote an ecumenical vision is through the Ecumenical Lecture Series, during which time invited ecumenical lecturers are sent to a theological education institution of CCA member churches to deliver a series of lectures or conduct workshops with the faculty, students and the general public in the area.

Initiated in 2001, this program enables CCA to reach out to more people in their own contexts, thereby giving a face to CCA as a regional ecumenical movement and enabling CCA to participate more directly in some local activities. It also facilitates the exchange of lecturers or scholars and their exposure to other contexts, which then widens ecumenical horizons and experiences. It also encourages the hosting institution to own the program in terms of providing hospitality to the lecturers. On 21–24 March 2007, the CCA-PST (Pag-asa School of Theology) Ecumenical Lecture Series was launched at the PST in Brokenshire College, Madapo, Davao City, in southern Philip-

pines. PST is a young theological formation centre of the United Church of Christ in the Philippines (UCCP). Located in Davao City in Mindanao, geographically the largest city of the Philippines, it has the potential of being a truly ecumenical centre that cannot help but be immersed in issues of faith and life, justice and peace, faith and ideology in the midst of diverse cultures and religions.

When the PST administrative faculty, led by Pastor Eileen Bordios, approached the CCA Faith, Mission and Unity desk for help in broadening the exposure of its students, faculty and alumni to ecumenical issues, she very emphatically highlighted the issues of women, youth and children in this time of globalisation and under the banner of the UCCP quadrennial theme, 'Living in the Household of God'. Hence, the theme of the CCA-PST Ecumenical Lectures was 'Empowering Women's Leadership in the Household of God'.

Given the theme and the issues of women and youth, three resource persons were requested to give the first series of ecumenical lectures at PST: Hope S. Antone (CCA staff from UCCP) on the overall theme, Liza B. Lamis (staff of NCC Philippines from a Baptist tradition) on gender issues, and Phebe Gamata Crismo (a deaconess of the Methodist Church) on children and youth issues. Full texts of their presentations will be published in a forthcoming edition of *CTC Bulletin*.

Bordios said that the lecture-inputs and workshops by the resource persons challenged the alumni, students and faculty of the college and of the Southern Mindanao Conference. Hence, not only will the lecture series be part of their programs, they are also thinking of starting a certificate course for lay women, men and evangelists in the conference so that the studies on issues of women, youth and children will be taken seriously to the grassroots level. For the next ecumenical lecture series, they wish to focus on feminist biblical interpretation.

—Hope S. Antone

Hope Antone and Brokenshire College president Leopoldo Naïve releasing balloons to symbolise the launching of the CCA–Pag-asa School of Theology Ecumenical Lecture Series



# Is Peace Only a Dream?

School of Peace 2007 concludes that peace is an action that can be pursued and achieved

## Vision

We must evolve a new vision for justpeace, and the vision we hold in our spirits must be this: militarisation and preemptive wars will give way to united efforts to end economic slavery, heal the sick, free the imprisoned and bring all people into harmonious relationships. Resources used to produce weapons of mass destruction will be used to build weapons that destroy poverty, disease, hunger, inequality and illiteracy. Technology used to develop systems to deliver missiles and 'smart bombs' to any part of the world at a moment's notice will be changed into systems that can deliver necessary food, medical and other resource assistance. Swords will be beaten into ploughshares and spears into pruning hooks. Mouths that speak out propaganda and falsehoods meant to divide and conquer will turn into ears that listen and spirits that empathise. And all movements for peace and justice will shift from a culture of reaction to a culture of transformation.

This is the vision of the School of Peace, conducted now for the second consecutive year. It is a program of the Interfaith Cooperation Forum in Asia, which was established by the Christian Conference of Asia, the Asia and Pacific Alliance of YMCAs and Evangelischer Entwicklungsdienst (EED).

This year participants came from Nepal, Sri Lanka, Indonesia, the Philippines, Thailand, Myanmar and Cambodia. Among the participants there were six Christians, six Muslims, three Buddhists and one animist. All of the participants live and work in areas of conflict. The three participants who served as interns in the course in 2006 also attended and assisted the coordinator in managing the activities.

This gave them the opportunity to continue their learning and also share their experience and skills with the new participants. It is hoped that their involvement will help form a bridge between all the participants of the two courses to expand and strengthen the regional interfaith justpeace movement.

The three-and-a-half-month course was held for the second time on the Visthar campus in Bangalore, India. Participants were involved in an action/reflection process focusing learning on three themes: self and society; culture, religion and spirituality; and transformation. The process ended in May with the celebration of the festival of justpeace together with marginalised communities from around India.

Participants were expected to keep a daily journal of their personal journey during these months together. Occasionally they shared some of their journal entries with a mentor who was appointed to them. They also wrote a reflective essay following each of the three modules to share what they were learning and how their perspectives on the issues might be changing.

These methods helped them to become more aware of their own transformation process. To keep a written record of all discussions and activities, two participants were selected each day to take detailed notes. These notes were typed out in the evening and kept in a file so participants could



The School of Peace participants were involved in an action/reflection process focusing learning on three themes: self and society; culture, religion and spirituality; and transformation

## School of Peace Curriculum

The curriculum of the School of Peace in 2007 focused on action/reflection rather than on lengthy theoretical inputs. Case studies, films and field visits helped make the modules practical so participants could think more creatively about application to their local situations. The course comprised three modules.

### Module 1: Poverty

**Aim:** To critique the dominant/standardised economic notions of poverty and offer alternate perspectives resulting from an understanding of human needs.

**Subjects included:**

- human needs and the causes of poverty,
- poverty and globalisation,
- what is violence in the context of poverty?
- development, violence and disintegration,
- development, violence and disintegration of life,
- people's responses to poverty,
- religious perspectives and responses to poverty.

### Module 2: Pluralities—Religion, Faith and the Sense of the Sacred

**Aim:** To enable participants to recognise and understand differences, moving from tolerance, to respect, to engagement.

**Subjects included:**

- identity and the politics of identity,
- national identity and global citizenship,
- constructions of the sacred, religious and secular,
- communalism, fascism and religion,
- fragmentation and loss of community,
- responses to stereotyping and profiling,
- affirmation of plurality and connectedness of life: examination of indigenous knowledge systems.

### Module 3: Towards Transformation

**Aim:** To enable participants to envision cultures and communities of justpeace and initiate strategies for transformation of self and society.

**Subjects included:**

- understanding of power,
- myths of peace,
- the logic of deterrence,
- review of Modules 1 and 2,
- understanding and theories of nonviolence,
- responses to present realities by civil society,
- grassroots initiatives and wisdom for justpeace.



always review the learnings of the past weeks. Each module also included a week-long field exposure to areas relevant to the issues being discussed.

Usually these field trips were done in smaller groups, allowing for more intense immersion with local communities involved in such struggles against injustice as caste, tribal discrimination, gender inequality etc. Group reports on these field visits were prepared and shared with the larger group immediately upon return to the Visthar campus.

A daily schedule was set but was very flexible, allowing for changes to fit the needs of participants and resource persons. Generally, each day started with an interfaith reflection by one of the participants.

Through this reflection, they could share what they felt their faith brought to the process for

building justpeace. Following the reflection, the two participants responsible for recording the previous day's events read their report. Time was given for others to add or correct the report and for sharing any 'hot news' from the participants' countries. This could include news of conflict, natural disasters or hopeful changes towards peaceful settlement of a conflict.

This helped everyone to be aware of what was happening in other countries and also to find ways to be supportive.

At the end of the three and a half months, with their active involvement in all the activities, the participants came to conclude that 'to build and promote peace in this world may be very hard and difficult, yet it is not a dream, but an action that can be pursued and achieved'.

—Tony Waworuntu

To build and promote peace in this world may be very hard and difficult, yet it is not a dream, but an action that can be pursued and achieved

### Moving from Tolerance to Acceptance to Engagement



One of the guest speakers, Mr Swami Agnivesh, a well-known Hindu activist, in his lively and very personal sharing, urged everyone present to have the courage to confront all forms of untouchability and intolerance, whether resulting from a system of caste, class, culture or religious fundamentalism. It is our responsibility, he said, to bring about change and to end conflicts that are attributed to our religious and political differences. This fitted well with the motto of the program, which was 'Moving from Tolerance to Acceptance to Engagement'. If we can learn to engage with those who are different from us, rather than just tolerate or accept them, we can all grow more deeply in our own spirituality and recognise ways to work cooperatively to build communities of justpeace.

# A Fully Accessible Church

## Disabling God in the midst of disabled people?

The ideas of perfection and of beauty that are ingrained in our psyche and sanctioned by our culture tend to preclude any form of disability

Probably 10 per cent of the human population has some deformity or other, yet they seldom receive any attention. Able-bodied people try to avoid their company. In many societies persons with disability are treated as second-class people, objects of charity or even abandoned. They are subjected to prejudicial attitudes and discriminatory acts by the able-bodied majority. Society keeps them ignorant and dependent by denying education and employment opportunities. The suffering and miseries of many disabled people in Asia are compounded because of poverty and poor medical facilities.

Christian theology is done by able-bodied people for the able-bodied. Theology from the perspective of persons with disabilities is almost silent in the Christian tradition. We have a rather negative theology towards persons with disabilities as the theology is constructed by able-bodied people. There are Christians who think that disability is related to sin and the work of demons, that it is a

curse and punishment from God. Healing on the other hand is always understood as a sign of faith. People think that those who are not healed do not have strong faith and that the lack of faith leads to disability.

The ideas of perfection and of beauty that are ingrained in our psyche and sanctioned by our culture tend to preclude any form of disability. There is no 'beauty' in the disabled. Perfection is measured by physical and mental endowments that are not always found in the experiences of the disabled. Any form of disability makes people less than human—they are not created in the image of God, they do not reflect God's image and they cannot be considered a perfect being of God. For this reason persons with disability are often excluded from society and religious life. There are parents who are ashamed to show their disabled children in public and keep them inside the house all through their lives. Some parents who put their children in care never come to see their children again.

The world would be poorer without persons with disabilities. Jesus protected, forgave, loved and cared for them. Jesus strongly disputed the connection between sin and blindness, saying, 'Neither this man nor his parents sinned; he was born blind so that God's works might be revealed in him.' (John 9:3)

Jesus challenged the Jewish understanding that God punishes sinners by blinding them or their animals. (Exodus 4:11) In Jewish society, those with a defect in the body were not allowed to come near the Lord's offering. (Leviticus 21:18–21) The blind and the lame were not allowed to come into the house of the Lord. (2 Samuel 5:9) Are our churches similarly closed to persons with disabilities?

We need to affirm that diversity is an integral part of creation. Society—from its most basic unit (the family) to its broader forms (the church and the community)—has to be a place where everyone, regardless of gifting and ability, is genuinely welcomed, given every opportunity to participate



meaningfully and nurtured towards fulfilment. The churches in Asia need to be more open to persons with disabilities. A fully accessible church should permit the people with disability access to the sanctuary so that they are able to participate in all aspects of the church activities. Fully accessible churches should have programs for the intellectually impaired, sign language interpreters for the deaf, seating that can permit wheelchair users to sit with their families and assign Sunday readings to the blind.

Realising the churches will remain a disabled community without the inclusion of persons with disabilities, Ecumenical Theological Education of CCA and the World Council of Churches, the Ecu-

menical Disability Advocacy Network and the Association for Theological Education in Southeast Asia jointly organised a workshop in Manila on 22–27 May 2007 with a view to reconstruct a more inclusive church towards persons with disabilities and to come up with a resource book on the theology of disability for theological students and church leaders, with a specific Asian perspective. This built on a process begun in Limuru, Kenya, in 2004, and followed by similar events in Bangalore, India (2006), and Suva, Fiji (2006).

There were thirty participants, including three participants from Kenya, one from Jamaica and one from the Solomon Islands.

—Wati Longchar

The churches in Asia need to be more open to persons with disabilities

## Declaration

At the end of the consultation, the participants issued a declaration calling the attention of the churches, ecumenical bodies and nongovernmental organisations to work together more rigorously so that a common vision for the establishment of an inclusive, affirming and empowering global society may be realised. Toward this end, the participants call upon:

- churches:
  - to use the WCC’s interim theological statement, ‘A Church of All and for All’, for discussion, education and reflection,
  - to carry out a program of pastoral care and counselling to help those who care to address systems that disempower and victimise,
  - to proactively involve people with disabilities in all aspects of church life,
- ecumenical coalitions, theological networks and national councils of churches:
  - to continue facilitating the holding of local, regional and international dialogues, conferences and consultations that address the many issues affecting people with disabilities,
- ATESEA and theological institutions:
  - to adopt and implement policies towards full accessibility of the learning environment,
  - to enhance opportunities for participatory learning,
  - to ensure the acquisition of practical ministerial skills,
  - to sharpen the missiological focus of theological education from a disability perspective,
  - to revisit employment practices for faculty and staff as well as admission policies for students to ensure that no one is discriminated on the basis of disability,
- people with disabilities and their organisations:
  - to intensify their initiatives in the development of high-quality resources for teaching, self-learning and public education,
  - to continue developing networks and partnerships that will strengthen their advocacy agenda,
  - to continue chronicling their positive experiences and best practice models,
- governments:
  - to include in the basic curriculums of their educational institutions at least a module on the positive image of people with disabilities as well as the challenges of empowering them. We further enjoin government, business and industry to enhance the meaningful employment of people with disabilities,
  - to sign and ratify the United Nations’ Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, as well as promulgate local legislation and policies to implement the convention.

# Life-skills-based Education

Church and government working together in the Philippines

**H**alf of all new HIV infections in east and southeast Asia are among young people below 25 years of age. In Vietnam, 63 per cent of the people infected with HIV are under the age of 30. Injecting drug use accounts for at least 40 per cent of all HIV transmission in China, Indonesia, Malaysia, Myanmar and Vietnam. In Thailand, 50 to 60 per cent of new infections every year are among people under 24 years of age. The impact on women is higher than that of men. Data from a number of Asian countries reveal that 32 to 74 per cent of female sex workers are below 25 years of age.

Youth in east and southeast Asia are still growing up in abject poverty, without the opportunities or the right kind of information and services they need to reach their full potential as productive members of society. Many of them are unable to attend school or drop out of school, are exploited

or live in conflict or other especially difficult circumstances. They are vulnerable to a cluster of risk behaviours, particularly drug and alcohol use and unprotected sex.

## The Philippines Scenario

In the Philippines the estimated HIV prevalence is less than 1 per cent. However, the incidence of sexually transmitted infections (STIs), multiple partners and injecting drug use is increasing. As part of the joint CCA-UNESCAP project on 'Strengthening Life Skills for Positive Youth Health Behaviour', the baseline survey undertaken by UNESCAP among 1,200 out-of-school youth (OSY) aged 15–24 in Pasay City, Manila, came out with interesting findings. Pasay City is one of the seventeen cities and municipalities of Metro Manila. Apart from the Ninoy Aquino International Airport, the city is also known for its entertainment businesses—restaurants, coffee shops and clubs, particularly those located along Roxas Boulevard facing Manila Bay. The city is classified as highly urbanised by Philippine standards.

The baseline survey revealed that the majority of the out-of-school youth surveyed were unmarried or single (79 per cent). The out-of-school youth in Pasay City smoke, drink alcohol and use illegal drugs at much higher levels than OSYs in the rest of the Philippines. Thirty-four per cent of the single OSYs have engaged in sex. Their friends comprise a major influential factor as sources of information and as models for their own behaviour.

Both young females and males expressed a lack of confidence (at least 42 per cent) in suggesting and discussing the issues of condom use and having safe sex with their partners. Strategic interventions promoting reproductive health and building or strengthening life skills were identified as important. Specific knowledge on the manner of transmission of HIV virus was low. Myths and misconceptions regarding HIV/AIDS existed.

Young people in Pasay City learn essential life skills for health promotion





## Life Skills for Positive Health Behaviour

The four-day Training of Trainers (TOT) program was organised in partnership with the Pasay City Government. The aim of the training program was to build a team of community-based trainers and initiate community-based-life-skills training networks to create a supportive environment for positive youth health behaviour among out-of-school youth in Pasay City.

The training brought participants from the Social Welfare and Development Office, the Health Office, the Pag-asa Youth Association Special Drug Education Centre Program, the Department of Education, the National Council of Churches in the Philippines (NCCP), Iglesia Independencia (IFI), Intercessors for the Philippines and other churches. There were fifty-seven participants (twenty-five male and thirty-two females).

Resource persons included Dr Rebecca Lim, MSI Professional Service Ltd, Dr Giovanni Templonuevo, Professional Personnel—HIV and AIDS/STI, UNFPA, Ms Rowena L. Tabuso, Community Organiser, Pasay City Cooperative Development Office, and Ms Shirley Susan, Consultant, CCA-UNESCAP.

The training included presentations and group activities—group discussions, role plays, games and exercises—based on UNESCAP's Life Skills Training Kit on 'HIV Prevention among Young People'.

The participatory approach enabled participants to be open minded, energetic, creative and actively involved in the discussions and activities. There were practical sessions on peer education, and the participants identified specific activities and drew out a strategy plan to mobilise out-of-school youth and other stakeholders in the community.

## Working Together: Church and the Government

In the Philippines, the major barriers to prevention, treatment, care and support include fear, stigma and discrimination associated with HIV/AIDS, even among family members. This therefore discourages voluntary counselling and testing for treatment, and discriminates those living with HIV. The Roman Catholic Church plays a vital role and recent trends

have shown deepening engagement and dialogue with the church leaders.

At the training program, senior pastors, youth secretaries, youth leaders and members from twelve churches from Pasay City were represented. It was very encouraging to see the openness with which topics on adolescence sexual and reproductive health were discussed. There were four participants from the National Council of Churches (NCCP). Mr Lesley Capus, youth secretary, NCCP, participated in the discussions and provided valuable input.

The church leaders felt that life-skills-based education that includes sexual and reproductive health information was effective in building positive reproductive and sexual health of young people in the community.

They have committed to provide their infrastructure and services in mobilising out-of-school youth and organising peer education activities within their own communities in cooperation with the Cooperative Development Office, Pasay City Government, during the year.

In the context of rising social and economic disparities in our nations, the role of the church assumes great significance.

The challenge for churches today is to articulate the vision of healing and reconciliation that is faithful to God's redemptive plan for our world. We are called to make that difference!

—Shirley Susan

The participatory approach is effective—it makes learning easy and enjoyable



# Proactive Mission

## WCC-CCA Liaison Group Meeting reconvenes

The WCC and CCA have common concerns—Asian theologies and spiritualities, peace and conflict transformation, capacity building for church workers at all levels, relationships with people of other faiths and religions, health and climate-change issues ...

**T**hrough the regional ecumenical organisations network and the bilateral relationship of the World Council of Churches and CCA we are urged to be proactive in God's mission in Asia. It is imperative for Asian churches to proclaim the gospel—the good news for peace, reconciliation and unity in Asia today.

The WCC-CCA Liaison Group meeting took place at the Lotus Hotel Pang Suan Kaew in Chiang Mai, Thailand, during 6–7 June 2007. The meeting aimed to highlight ecumenical concerns in new emerging Asian realities, with a view to identifying specific adaptation needs to be considered under the mandates of the WCC and CCA.

This joint meeting has been convened annually since 1996, but due to internal restructuring in both organisations in 2005 and 2006, the meeting was postponed. It was reconvened this year.

During the meeting, various ongoing and forthcoming programs of WCC and CCA were shared. There are areas of similarities and common concerns—Asian theologies and spiritualities, peace and conflict transformation, capacity building for church workers at all levels, relationships with people of other faiths and religions, health and climate-change issues and so on.

In the context of escalating political conflict and war in Sri Lanka, it is important that WCC,

CCA and ecumenical organisations send top religious leaders for pastoral visits to Sri Lanka,' Dr Jayasiri Peiris, general secretary of the National Christian Council of Sri Lanka emphasised.

It was agreed that relationship and cooperation should not be limited to leaders at the international level but should also be reflected at the national level.

Capacity development for church leaders at national and local levels needs to be given adequate attention. Local church and community leaders are important players in pursuing peace and conflict resolution.

For Asia, the liaison group discussed the seriousness of such issues as HIV/AIDS, water and climate change etc. and called for systematic planning and joint implementation. Information exchange between WCC and CCA is to be strengthened.

The next WCC-CCA Liaison Group meeting will be held prior to the CCA General Committee meeting in September 2008 so that the report of the meeting can be shared with the CCA leadership.

It was also agreed that the general secretaries of national councils of churches should meet between the meetings of the WCC-CCA Liaison Group and the CCA General Committee.

—Prawate Khid-arn



CCA and WCC dialogue

# Migration Matters

## Global Ecumenical Network on Migration meeting held in Kenya

The Global Ecumenical Network on Migration (GEM) meeting, organised by the Justice, Diakonia and Responsibility for Creation: Migration and Social Justice desk of the World Council of Churches, was held on 5–8 June 2007 in Nairobi, Kenya.

There were thirty-two participants, representing the All Africa Conference of Churches, the National Council of Churches in Australia, the Christian Conference of Asia, the Caribbean Conference of Churches, the Middle East Council of Churches, the Pacific Conference of Churches, the Canadian ecumenical justice initiative KAIROS and the Churches Commission for Migrants in Europe (addressing refugee issues on behalf of the Conference of European Churches). Unfortunately, the Latin American Council of Churches (CLAI) was unable to be present due to visa-related problems.

During our prayers in Nairobi we were reminded that Jesus in Matthew 25:35, 40 said, 'I was a stranger and you welcomed me ... just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.'

During our meeting we once again learnt that many of the 200 million migrants around the globe are confronted with enormous difficulties: being exploited and subjected to xenophobias. Our hosts in Africa shared their sorrow that many of the youth of Africa are leaving the continent, often to die in the seas of the Mediterranean or the Atlantic on their way to a supposedly better life in Europe.

Christians from the Middle East reported on the huge refugee crisis today developing in their war- and conflict-torn region, which is further accelerating the departure of Christians from the region that is the cradle of Christianity. They recalled the plight of migrant workers coming into the Middle East, who remain in isolation and precarious conditions. The churches are therefore called to witness in an environment that often has little space for the church.

Asia's participants reported on the situation of internally displaced persons (IDPs), caused by armed conflict, state-sponsored displacement and

natural disasters, such as floods and tsunamis. Colleagues from the Pacific gave witness to the emerging migration challenge due to climate change, while the churches working in the Caribbean are characterised by migration under precarious conditions, which often results in migrants facing hostility on arrival.

Churches from Europe, Australia and North America reported on their efforts to raise awareness among churches to be open to new migrants and to provide them with any assistance as required.

Churches across the globe are active in:

- assisting refugees and displaced persons and other groups of uprooted people and advocating for their rights,
- welcoming migrants into their midst as expression of the global fellowship of the church and the call that 'they may all be one. As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us' (John 17:21–22),
- upholding the rights of migrants and refugees against exploitation, discrimination, racism and prejudice, irrespective of race, nationality or residence status—based on the conviction that all human beings are created in the image of God.

We recall the command of Leviticus 19:33–34: 'When an alien resides with you in your land, you shall not oppress the alien. The alien who resides with you shall be to you as the citizen among you; you shall love the alien as yourself, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt.'

—Janejinda Pawadee and Freddy De Alwis

The 200 million migrants around the globe are confronted with enormous difficulties: being exploited, confronted with xenophobia and often forced to migrate under precarious conditions



# From Bad to Worse

The situation in Sri Lanka cries out for 'those who make peace'

People in Sri Lanka, both Sinhalese and Tamils, are living in fear

**S**ri Lanka is entering another critical time. Many Sri Lankans think the current national political situation is moving from 'bad to worse'. 'Go to war' is the prevailing sentiment—people think this is the only way to break the deadlock between the government and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) at this stage. It is surprising to learn that more and more ordinary people, now more than 50 per cent, want the government to go ahead with war in order to defeat the LTTE.

## Living in Fear

People, both Sinhalese and Tamils, are living in fear. Untargeted bombings to defeat the LTTE have already displaced thousands of ordinary people in the northern and eastern parts of Sri Lanka.

Internally displaced persons, abductions, disappearances, extrajudicial killings, extortions, children and abuse of women, media suppression,

arbitrary arrests, continued detentions without charges, breaking up of democratic public rallies, threats on the lives of selected political and trade union activists and everything else that is obstructing and breaking down civil life in Sri Lanka have produced a seemingly insurmountable human tragedy.

Killings and abductions are commonplace in all parts of the country, but are in far larger numbers in the north and the east, unavoidable consequences of military rule.

## Reluctance of the State

The reluctance of the state to be more open and allow impartial observers to find out the truth behind these covert acts, confirms the assumption that blatant violations of fundamental rights and a breakdown in the rule of law are occurring throughout the island. The situation has worsened this year with the promulgation of new emer-



Meeting with the executive board of the National Peace Council of Sri Lanka

gency regulations. The situation in Sri Lanka has become so desperate for local people that urgent action is needed. Civilians desperately need better protection, with increasing human rights abuses committed against civilians by the Sri Lankan government, the Tamil Tigers, the Karuna faction and other armed groups. The lives of hundreds of thousands of Sri Lankans are being affected.

The Sri Lankan government is failing in its responsibility to protect civilians—there have been over 4,000 deaths since December 2005.

The Tamil Tigers have killed hundreds of civilians in summary executions and indiscriminate bomb attacks. They are continuing to forcibly recruit child soldiers and have even prevented civilians from fleeing the fighting in the north and east.

## Fighting

The Tigers have been fighting since 1983 for a separate homeland for Sri Lanka's 3.1 million Tamils, a largely Hindu ethnic group concentrated in eastern and northern Sri Lanka. The Tamils have faced decades of discrimination from the predominantly Buddhist Sinhalese, who make up a majority of the nation's 19 million people.

At least 65,000 people were killed before the 2002 ceasefire. The ceasefire brought a measure of relief, but in the last eighteen months it has almost entirely unravelled as tit-for-tat attacks grow into an undeclared all-out war, with the Tigers employing tactics ranging from suicide bombing to air raids. The letter and spirit of the ceasefire agreement have been violated in almost every respect. The CFA now mainly serves the military on both sides and especially the hardliners of the Sri Lankan Armed Forces—it usefully covers up the atrocities of an undeclared war.

## Human Rights Violations

Human rights violations in every aspect of civil life are the direct result of the present government's approach of militarily crushing the LTTE. The government carries out a hate campaign against the LTTE, that in effect is not only anti-Tamil but is also anti-peace. Painted as patriotism, the campaign gives the government a licence to suppress the media, and enables it to arrest anyone under the label of LTTE supporter in the name of the 'war on terrorism'.

It seems that the government of Sri Lanka is serious in its endeavour to resolve the LTTE problem—militarily—by the end of 2007. The humanitarian catastrophe caused by the war is heart-rend-

ing. The lives of the people in the districts of Jaffna, Killinochi and Mullaitivu have come to a grinding halt, with people facing severe food shortages. Even more saddening is that this unprecedented human catastrophe has not evoked the required humanitarian response from other parts of Sri Lanka or from outside Sri Lanka. Somehow the churches in Sri Lanka, through the National Christian Council, have to draw the attention of the public and other civil society organisations and individuals to this food shortage.

## Peace on the Agenda

From a religious perspective (including all religions) and for the sake of the country it is important that both the government of Sri Lanka and the LTTE resume the peace talks with honesty and sincerity. Peace and reconciliation should be on the national agenda to resolve the basic issues that both parties are committed to implement. They must come back to the peace table, rather than escalate the war and hostilities. A win-win approach and solution should be the strategy for the peace talks and conflict resolution. It might be possible to take a lesson from how the Government of the Republic of Indonesia and the Free Aceh Movement (GAM) came to end their forty-year conflict.

So many efforts have been made in the last twenty years to stop the conflict in Sri Lanka and so many lives have been lost, but peace still seems far away. Unlike the politicians and militants who seek power at any cost, without any concern for the lives of people and their human rights, religious organisations and their leaders should be concerned about their people, society and nation. They have the duty to speak out for those who are oppressed, marginalised and victimised, so that their sufferings and cries do not go unheeded or unnoticed.

Large parts of Sri Lanka are virtually sealed off from the rest of the country. Hence the sufferings, abductions, the hundreds of thousands of internally displaced people, subject to torture and intimidation, go unnoticed. Churches, religious leaders and organisations are called to speak out louder to change the situation.

What looks impossible for mere mortals is possible for God: 'The wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without a trace of partiality or hypocrisy. And a harvest of righteousness is sown in peace for those who make peace.' (James 3:17-18)

—Tony Waworuntu

From a religious perspective (including all religions) and for the sake of the country it is important that both the government of Sri Lanka and the LTTE resume the peace talks with honesty and sincerity

# The Violence of Dowry

CCA intern Abigail Peter looks at the practice of dowry

Over the last few years, under the pressures of the cash economy, the practice of dowry has become profoundly corrupted

Chilling reports and articles of the mysterious deaths of young women are a usual sight in local Indian newspapers. Every week there are probably two to three such cases. Most of these cases are immediately referred to the dowry investigation sector, as findings show that most of the deaths are usually related to the practice of dowry.

Dowry was initially a practice where a gift of money or valuables was given to the family of the bridegroom by the family of the bride at the time of her marriage. It was customary for parents of the bride to give a contribution towards the newlywed's household expenses. But over the last few years, under the pressures of the cash economy, the practice of dowry has become profoundly corrupted. Instead of being a custom that helps the newlyweds financially it has now become a social evil.

## A Source of Income

India's newspapers are filled with pages of men advertising their eligibility and social prowess,

usually using their caste, high-ranking jobs and family influence as a bargaining chip. The higher the prospective groom's social ranking, the higher is his family's demand for dowry. The cash dowry alone for a doctor or an engineer usually ranges from 10–15 lakhs or more.

Since a 'good' marriage is often seen by the bride's family as a means to climb up the social ladder, parents will often go out of their way to find a good suitor for their daughters. Many sell their property or family heirlooms and eventually incur debts to fulfil the terms of the dowry demanded. The demands range from jewellery to vehicles and lands. Most common are household items such as refrigerators and televisions. Some parents even start saving money and valuables from the time a daughter is born, as they realise that some day there will be huge expenditures at the time of her marriage.

This makes the coming of a newborn daughter an unwelcome burden, a liability on the family, thereby compounding the already oppressed position of women in Indian society.



Abigail with the children at Bandhavi School, Visthar, Bangalore

## Violence in the Culture of Dowry

Dowry taking exists not only during the wedding period, but as a practice that takes place throughout the marriage. When a husband's family faces financial difficulties the wife is sent back to the home of her parents to get more money and she is expected to return only when she has it.

Violence comes into the picture when the wife or her family is unable to satisfy the financial demands made by her husband's family. The husband, and in most cases his mother, severely batters the wife. The wife is helpless—even her own family will not take her back as they think it is better for her to stay and silently receive the mistreatment in her new home rather than return and taint her family name in their neighbourhood and society. A survey of 10,000 Indian women conducted by India's Health Ministry in the year 2001 found that more than half of those interviewed considered violence to be a normal part of married life.

In some cases, the inability to continuously comply with dowry demands results in bride burnings. Many dowry deaths in India are the result of the burning of victims. This happens as the husband as a widower is then eligible to remarry and bring in more income to the household. In-laws often report these incidents as an accident, the most common being stove-burst. However when evidence suggests foul play, their stories change to suicide.

## Are Current Anti-dowry Regulations Sufficient?

Anti-dowry laws were enacted in India in 1961. However, the laws themselves have done little to halt dowry transactions and the violence that is often associated with them. Police and the courts are notorious for turning a blind eye to cases of violence against women and dowry-associated deaths. Influential in-laws can easily bribe officials to see that the case evidence points to suicide. The parents of victims do not speak up due to threats from in-laws. In fact, very few dowry harassment cases and deaths are reported to the authorities by the victim's family.

Further, many Indians in rural areas are not even aware of the existence of the anti-dowry laws. The exchange of dowry may be greater among the middle class, but dowry deaths and harassments are more prevalent among the lower middle class. This is mainly due to illiteracy amongst women in rural areas. Girls are often married before the age of 18. Lacking proper education, they easily become vulnerable during the time of marriage

and, as a result, are isolated, have no advocates, and are in no position to assert themselves when harassed.

## A Cultural, Not a Religious Practice

The practice of dowry is not just a tradition of Hindus. Indians from all religious backgrounds are known to give and receive dowry. In spite of being aware that the practice degrades women and measures the value of a woman in the form of worldly wealth, many Christians also continue to demand and give dowry. Often weddings that take place in churches are solemnised only after arrangements of the dowry have been discussed and fixed between both families.

Many churches have failed to address this issue as a social evil even though it is haunting the lives of many of their members. Where do church leaders and members stand in addressing this issue? Has it become a culture accepted even in the church?

## Groups Working to Make Women's Lives Better

When homes turn into torture chambers for women, where can they turn to for hope? Organisations and movements such as Vimochana, Bangalore, and Bihar Anjuman work to bring justice for female victims who suffer from this violence.

Women who stand against the dowry system give hope to other women who wish to attain their right to a marriage where they are considered equal to the men they marry.

## The Dowry in the Eyes of a Young Woman

My experience with dowry-related issues has broadened my perspective on culture and its link with violence. Being aware of the dowry as a social evil and not a cultural practice that should be encouraged is important for a young Indian woman today. The individual stand of one woman against this practice is powerful enough to open the eyes of her peers and family to question the culture as well. All people are created equal and therefore women should also receive equal rights to property. Once women become equal inheritors, parents will not have to depend only on sons and daughters-in-law for old-age security, because daughters too will be empowered to take care of their parents. This will make families less male-centric and therefore, less prone to violent tussles. We need to combat the culture of disinheritance if we wish to effectively combat the growing hold of the dowry culture.

The individual stand of one woman against this practice is powerful enough to open the eyes of her peers and family to question the culture as well

*We thank the team at Visthar, Bangalore, for enabling research and interviews on the issue of dowry. Visthar is an NGO training centre that also runs Bandhavi, a school for girls that are at risk of being dedicated as devadasis.*

# Lay Leadership Training in Cambodia

The churches in Svay Rieng Province in Cambodia are experiencing unprecedented growth in the number of believers being added to their fellowships. Consequently there is a need for more leaders for the small groups that are springing up in villages throughout the province



Training activities at the local church compound



A woman leader shares her experiences on leadership

During 26–28 March 2007 the Mekong Ecumenical Partnership Program (MEPP) and the Kampuchea Christian Council (KCC) organised the second of a series of five trainings intended to pilot a project on lay leadership training for KCC member churches. The churches in Svay Rieng Province were chosen as the pilot group because the churches in this province are experiencing unprecedented growth in the number of believers being added to their fellowships. Consequently there is a need for more leaders for the small groups that are springing up in villages throughout the province.

The thirty-three potential lay leaders and pastors who participated in the first module will be actively involved through the five trainings to be conducted during the year. The second training was held in Phom Thmei Church, Chhrey Thom Commune, Romeas Haek District of Svay Rieng Province because this is the area in which most participants were located. It gave the facilitators and the coordinator of the project a chance to see the real situation in which the participants live and minister. This village still has no access to electricity. The venue for the training was a village church. During the afternoons, the sessions were moved to a space outside the church building so that the participants could get some fresh air. Although the training was held during the beginning of the summer season in Cambodia, the participants were energetic and enjoyed the various sessions.

The communities in which these churches are found are very poor economically even in comparison to other parts of Cambodia. Romeas Haek District stretches along the border between Cambodia and Vietnam. Many of the participants have had first-hand experience of encroachment or other forms of exploitation from across the border. One participant lost his land when Vietnamese soldiers turned up one day and declared his area as part of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam. He and his family have been living in a shack on someone else's land ever since with no hope of getting their land back.

—Janejinda Pawadee



## Home Help

The Cambodian people endured a civil war during 1967–1975. Most people still face poverty, including the family of Win, a 5-year-old boy, and Osaphea, a 4-year-old girl. Engaging children at home to help their parents with their livelihood activities is common. Win and Osaphea are not in school and have no other choice but to help their parents, weaving the rims of the two or three baskets that their family is able to weave each day. Weaving baskets is one means of income generation—each of the basket is sold to a middle man for 2,000 riel (50c). The baskets are then sold for a much higher price, maybe double, or even more, in the market.

The training took place in the real situation in which the participants live and minister



No time to play with friends—Osaphea (age 4)



Win (age 5) has little choice but weave the edges of the basket to help his family earn a living

# Celebrate Jubilee!

Anna May Say Pa reflects on the jubilee from the perspective of Zacchaeus

He entered Jericho and was passing through it. A man was there named Zacchaeus; he was a chief tax collector and was rich. He was trying to see who Jesus was, but on account of the crowd he could not, because he was short in stature. So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore tree to see him, because he was going to pass that way. When Jesus came to the place, he looked up and said to him, 'Zacchaeus, hurry and come down: for I must stay at your house today. So he hurried down and was happy to welcome him. All who saw it began to grumble and said, 'He has gone to be the guest of one who is a sinner.' Zacchaeus stood there and said to the Lord, 'Look, half of my possessions, Lord, I will give to the poor; and if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I will pay back four times as much.' Then Jesus said to him, 'Today, salvation has come to this house, because he too is a son of Abraham. For the Son of Man came to seek out and to save the lost.' (Luke 19:1–10, NRSV)

In March we came together to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of the Christian Conference of Asia. In March 1957 the East Asia Christian Conference, as it was then called, was inaugurated at Parapat, Indonesia. So this year is CCA's year of jubilee.

The jubilee year first appears in Leviticus 25 and is later developed in Isaiah 58 and 61. The main theme of the jubilee is liberation. Four main elements of the jubilee were that the land was to lie fallow, slaves were to be freed, debts were to be cancelled and all land acquired during the past forty-nine years was to be returned.

In Isaiah 58:6 and 61:1–3 the prophet looks to the total salvation of God's people spiritually and materially. The people are to be liberated in all as-

pects of human life. In Jesus' reading of the Isaiah scroll at the synagogue in Nazareth, he identifies himself with this jubilee theme. Jesus proclaims 'the acceptable year of the Lord', which encompasses liberation from all forms of bondage. And that 'today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.' (Luke 4:21)

## Jesus and Zacchaeus

The encounter of Jesus with Zacchaeus in Jericho encapsulates the essence of jubilee. Jesus passed through Jericho on his journey to Jerusalem. Pilgrims and travellers on the way to Jerusalem usually went through Jericho to avoid passing through Samaritan territory. Also it was on a main trade route and was an important customs centre. As Jesus draws near the city, a blind beggar cries out to Jesus for help. Jesus asks him, 'What do you want me to do for you?' The blind man replies, 'Lord, let me receive my sight.' Jesus commends the man's faith that healed him so he could see. This healing event is paralleled by the next encounter Jesus has in Jericho, that with Zacchaeus.

News of Jesus' coming has preceded him and there is a crowd jostling to get a glimpse of him. One man in particular is eager to see him. What do we know of this man? His name is Zacchaeus. He is a chief tax collector and rich. The two go together because tax collectors made money. The Roman officials levied different kinds of taxes, which were farmed out to publicans, or tax collectors. Zacchaeus had outbid other contenders to get the right to collect taxes. He probably made a lot of

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profit by cheating the people. He would collect as much as he could squeeze out of the people over and above what the Romans demanded, then pay his share to the Romans and pocket the rest (e.g. Luke 3:13). Tax collectors were very much despised by the people. In the Gospels 'tax collectors and sinners' are classed together. (Matthew 9:10, Mark 2:15 and Luke 5:30 and 15:1) They were considered ritually impure.

Zacchaeus has a great desire to see Jesus, to know who he is. He has heard tales about this wonder worker, this teller of parables, this friend of sinners. But he wants to see him with his own eyes. However, there are obstacles to his seeing Jesus closely. First, there are the people who crowd around Jesus. Next is Zacchaeus' stature—he is a short man. But Zacchaeus is an enterprising person. He has never let his short stature keep him down. As a rich man he is used to getting his own way. So he climbs a sycamore tree. Right away he has a good view of the procession.

Now something happens that Zacchaeus and the crowd never expected. Jesus looks up the sycamore tree and says, 'Zacchaeus.' Having been stigmatised because of his occupation and then to be addressed by name in a crowd is to be singled out and be identified as a person. This was Zacchaeus' first step towards community.

Then Jesus continues, 'Hurry and come down for I must stay in your house today.' In a children's song that I sang in Sunday school, this part goes like this, 'Zacchaeus, you come down, I'm coming to your house for tea!' Zacchaeus can hardly believe his ears. Hospitality is being asked. Jesus is inviting himself to the home of Zacchaeus the tax collector, Zacchaeus the outsider. Jesus is taking the risk of contamination. Is he really going into the house of a sinner?

In response, Zacchaeus hurries down and makes haste to welcome him into his house with joy. Zacchaeus is now another step closer to the circle of human companionship.

Not everyone is happy at this turn of events. The people are grumbling and murmuring, 'He has gone to be the guest of a sinner.' They are clearly disappointed and angry at Jesus' action. They thought he was on their side. Now, it looks like Jesus has switched sides.

Then, Zacchaeus surprises everyone by saying, 'I will give half of my property to the poor. And to anyone I have defrauded I will repay four times as much.' This restitution or reparation is based on Exodus 22:1, Leviticus 6:4 and Numbers 5:6–7. With these words Zacchaeus comes fully into the

circle of humanity. He has sinned, he has repented and is now willing to make reparations to heal the breach.

Jesus affirms Zacchaeus' action by proclaiming, 'Today salvation has come to this house, because he is a son of Abraham. For the Son of Man came to seek and save the lost.' Zacchaeus has welcomed Jesus into his home and now Jesus welcomes him back into the community as a son of Abraham. No longer is Zacchaeus the rich tax collector, he too is now recognised and included in the household of God.

Zacchaeus lives out the concept of jubilee by restoring to the poor what is rightfully theirs. Economic justice is an essential part of jubilee. Through his act of reparation he himself is restored to the full image of God. He becomes truly human. Though short of stature, he stands tall as son of Abraham. By this, it is evident that salvation has come into this house.

### Jesus Comes to Jericho Today

The Jerichos of today are places where the trading and bartering goes on, where the rich exploit the poor and the Zacchaeuses still cheat the people of the rightful fruits of their labour. Jericho is where children are robbed of their innocence and childhood and made to work on the streets, in factories and massage parlours or as soldiers fighting in the adults' wars. Jericho is where women exchange their freedom for work as migrant workers, commercial sex workers or mail-order brides. Jericho is the place where young people lose their chance for education and meaningful work but instead become cogs in the business machine.

Jesus comes to Jericho today in search of Zacchaeus. What will Zacchaeus do?

Zacchaeus lives out the concept of jubilee by restoring to the poor what is rightfully theirs

### Questions for Discussion

- Who are the people who play the role of Zacchaeus in your community today? What kinds of injustices and unequal structures do they perpetuate?
- How do the concepts of exclusion/inclusion, purity/impurity play out in this story and in society today?
- How can restoration and reparation be accomplished to bring about justice, peace and wholeness?
- In what ways can CCA celebrate jubilee in the true biblical sense?

# Living in Peace and Harmony

CCA-FIM intern Eddy Cahyana interviews a Buddhist monk in Chiang Mai

Plurality in Asia actually is our richness, which we should appreciate for fulfilling our lives and needs

**T**o live in this world, and particularly in our region of Asia, we need peace for sustainable living together. Asia is a region of plurality—in nations, cultures, languages, ethnicity, religion etc. This is actually our richness. The richness of our context is God's grace and every colourful gift with its distinctive value and uniqueness adds to the beauty of the earth. But unfortunately that richness oftentimes becomes a source of conflict among humans that also has impact on the environment.

Dr Pramaha Boonchuey Sirindharo, a Buddhist monk, is a leader who is well known in Chiang Mai Province. He is deputy rector and lecturer at Mahaculalongkorn Racha Wittayalai University, Doi Sutep, Chiang Mai, Thailand.

**Eddy** What does peace mean for you?

**Dr Pramaha** Peace is a coming to mind, a concentrating mind, heartedness, being full of unlimited compassion, gentleness, kindness. Peace means the inner peace of persons. Even though the meaning of peace starts within the individual, actually the peace of the individual is an expression of communal peace. In other words, when peace is really

a part of people as individuals, then automatically the community also lives in peace as a collective of individuals. So the individual peace and the harmony of community are interconnected.

According to Buddhist teaching, the eternal principle of dharma determines the harmonious functions of the cosmic machine. In order that we fulfil our role in the divine play (getting peace) we must behave within our dharma. Thus, we ought to do the right thing, at the right time, in the right way and for the right reason. By this we attain balance. To establish balance within ourselves ensures our own welfare and the welfare of society and opens the path prepared for us by the divine.

Humans depend on one another. Monks' lives depend on society and society's life depends on monks as well. While society gives food, clothes and houses to the monks, monks are responsible for teaching and giving advice to society.

**Eddy** Does plurality in Asia have advantages for living in togetherness?

**Dr Pramaha** Plurality in Asia actually is our richness, which we should appreciate for fulfilling our lives and needs. Diversity often becomes a cause of conflict but we should understand that because we all are friends we must live in friendship with each other. Religions should do a reinterpretation and deepening of our religious teachings on living in peace. As living beings (humans, animals, trees), we live together as a circle of harmonious life.

**Eddy** There are many conflicts throughout Asia. Does conflict have any direct or indirect correlation with religious interest or mission?



**Dr Pramaha** Oftentimes conflict in community is connected with religious motivation or interest. This is true for example in the southern part of Thailand, in Iraq, in Palestine and wherever religion becomes a powerful motivation in stirring up conflict.

But we should go back to the original teaching of our religions about peace and harmonious life so religions can become a source of peace. As a source of peace, religions must implement peace messages to eliminate or reduce conflict in Asia. Therefore it is urgent for religious leaders to work together in struggling for peace on the earth, starting with ourselves.

In many cases religious followers struggle for their own greatness or their own interest, ignoring others. Oftentimes we only identify ourselves as better than others. Identifying a culture as our sole religious possession reduces the meaning of plurality as our collective possession. The Thai greeting, *sawatdee krap*, for example, is not just a Buddhist cultural expression as the majority religion, but the Thai people's possession as a whole. Nowadays we are facing a common enemy—that is consumerism—which is causing people to forget their focus on mindfulness towards peace.

**Eddy** How important is a religious leader's role in reducing conflict in community?

**Dr Pramaha** The role of religious leaders is very significant in reducing conflict in the community because they are key persons in the formation of the spiritual life of people. Whatever they say to people about theological claims, people will logically do or follow. Therefore religious leaders should do and practise peace for living in harmony. We practise our religious virtue in administrative and social contexts. It is not for our own group solely but for the community as a whole. According to Buddha's theological perspective, truth is a universal virtue for all people and for all creation. So the role of religious leaders is very important, not only in preaching but also to be a pattern of practising the truth as well.

**Eddy** Is building interfaith cooperation and collaboration possible to build a community of peace for all? What should we do to strengthen interfaith cooperation or collaboration?

**Dr Pramaha** Yes, it is very feasible and we should do it. But we will be able to do it only in honesty of heart without any 'expectations'. Expectation means something like a 'hidden agenda'—which is only for our own benefit. A hidden agenda is a hindrance to reaching genuine interfaith cooperation for peace. Hidden agendas make genuine interfaith cooperation meaningless, if not impossible. Building a community of peace that starts with having an open mind and having no hidden agenda is very difficult. It includes putting an end to all activities that make a bad impact on others. It should include doing good things to support and strengthen togetherness in community. Therefore, it is very feasible for religious leader to sit around together at a table to get mutual good understanding and good resolution for peace in our context. By this we can have more understanding of our own religions and that of our neighbours.

Whether in a monarchical or other models of government, the involvement of religious leaders in political matters is needed in order to create stable and conducive conditions. Politics without religion is like a boat without direction or control. In this matter the function of religious leaders is giving good advice for good governance.

As religious leaders and followers, we all need to learn to live together by:

- facing the same enemy, i.e. our bad will. In this regard we should understand each other for mutual benefit as a whole,
- working together. Start learning from one another, not only from our founders but also from history. We must learn from bad things in the past and do forgiveness for the good of life ahead,
- helping each other without 'expectation' but with pure integrity as motivation.

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Caesar D'Mello

## New ECOT Director

The Ecumenical Coalition on Tourism (ECOT) has appointed Caesar D'Mello from Australia as its new executive director. ECOT is an international ecumenical agency formed by regional ecumenical organisations around the world, including the Christian Conference of Asia. It has links with the World Council of Churches and the Catholic

Church through its Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences. Caesar was until recently director of programs at the Columban Mission Centre, a ministry of St Columban's Mission Society, based in Melbourne. Prior to that he was national director of Christian World Service (CWS), the international aid, justice and development commission of the National Council of Churches in Australia.

Tourism is a significant and expanding phenomenon of our times, with its total outlays now estimated by some economists to be in the vicinity of 12 per cent of global GDP. While it provides enjoyment to many, it has a downside that concerns churches in many countries.

Negative aspects of modern tourism include:

- the use of productive land in developing countries for resorts,
- golf courses and other tourism facilities with the consequent displacement of people and loss of agriculture and work,
- prostitution and trafficking of women and children,
- the 'commodification' of local and indigenous cultures,
- the widely invoked myth of tourism bringing a net gain to the developing world,
- the use of tourism by some governments to deny human rights and resources to their people
- ecological abuse resulting from certain tourism practices.

The challenge to ECOT and its supporters is to bring these concerns to the attention of churches and the wider global community for their action to realise equality and justice for affected communities through a fairer tourism. One of its well-known contributions has been to initiate ECPAT, the global network addressing issues of child prostitution in tourism. ECOT, which turns twenty-five this year, is based in Chiang Mai, Thailand.

## Welcome Naveen

Naveen Qayyum has been appointed CCA's new Consultant for Communications, and commenced 1 June 2007.

Naveen has a master's degree in mass communication from Kinnaird College for Women, Lahore, Pakistan, and completed a certificate course in Human Rights for Peace Studies from the South Asian Forum for Human Rights, Kathmandu, Nepal, in 2003. She started freelancing for newspapers and human rights publications as a student and contributed writings, mostly about social justice issues, minority rights, the women's movement and interreligious dialogue. She worked with Simorgh, a feminist activist organisation, for four years and coordinated their Urdu human rights textbook project for children. She also translated books from English to Urdu and contributed stories and poems for them.

She was selected as a youth intern with the World Council of Churches in Geneva where she worked in the communications department for interreligious dialogue events with their interreligious relations department. At the end of her internship she conceived an ecumenical documentary film project. She developed the concept as part of her learning experiences from the council and directed her debut documentary film, *Talking Faith* (see [www.talkingfaith.org](http://www.talkingfaith.org)) funded and supported by the WCC World Youth Program. The film is based in Pakistan and focuses on the interfaith relations in post-9/11 geopolitical contexts. It narrates the stories through the lives and perspectives of young people and includes voices from the key actors of interfaith dialogue in Pakistan.

Welcome to CCA, Naveen!



# Farewell Cora and Josef

The CCA staff organised a farewell lunch for Rolly and Cora Tabing-Reyes and Wieke and Josef Widyatmadja on 27 April in Chiang Mai. Cora served as a joint executive secretary for Ecumenical Formation, Gender Justice and Youth Empowerment, while Josef served as a joint executive secretary for Faith, Mission and Unity (FMU). They finished their terms with CCA in May 2007.



## New Leadership

### Council of Churches of Malaysia

The twelfth triennial general assembly and celebration of the sixtieth anniversary of the Council of Churches of Malaysia held on 23–26 April elected new leaders for the next three years:

- President: Rev. Dr Thomas Philips
- Deputy President: Bishop Datuk Voo Thien Fui
- Vice Presidents: Rev. Ong Hwai Teik, Bishop Bolly Lapok, Rev. Wong Fong Yang
- General Secretary: Rev. Dr Hermen Shastri
- Hon. Treasurer: Bishop Philip Lok

The assembly also honoured and gave appreciation for the retired CCM president, Rt Rev. Tan Sri Datuk Dr Lim Cheng Ean for his outstanding leadership of the churches in Malaysia and for being a devoted messenger of God to the world.

### National Council of Churches in India

The National Council of Churches in India announced the appointment of Vineeth Koshy as full-time youth secretary, effective from 16 May 2007. Vineeth Koshy is an ordained deacon of the Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church. He is young and dynamic and has a degree in commerce from the University of Gujarat and theological training at St Thomas Orthodox Theological Seminary, Kalmeshwar, Nagpur, which is affiliated to the Senate of Serampore College, for a Bachelor of Divinity degree.

### Presbyterian Church of Myanmar

The general assembly of the Presbyterian Church of Myanmar, held 23–24 February, elected new full-time secretaries for the next four years.

- General Secretary: Rev. Dr Lalengzauva
- Associate General Secretary: Rev. Vanlalmuana
- Mission Board Office:
  - Mission Secretary: Rev. Lalsangluaia
  - Associate Mission Secretary: Rev. Lian Kip Sawn
- Theological Education Board:
  - Principal: Rev. Lalthangvunga
- Baby Home Board:
  - Full-time Secretary: Rev. Ro Khar Thang

Opening service of the twelfth triennial general assembly of the Council of Churches of Malaysia



# Honour the Earth

1 Lead of the sp - ir - it  
 2 Care - ful - ly - we  
 3 For - give and  
 4 Love these peo - ple  
 5 Life in a



God of the small - est  
 mak - ing the land all  
 need a - gain each peo - ple  
 the - re - fore we



your is the gift of the  
 we - are the good - ness  
 shed from the earth  
 mak - ing you

Refrain  
 I am in awe for you

God and love for the earth



Words: Shirley E. Murray, Aotearoa New Zealand  
 Music: Douglas Mews, Aotearoa New Zealand  
 from *Sound the Bamboo*, CCA, 2000