



Christian Conference of Asia

cca news



CCA's future in our hands

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Faithful to our calling



At the outset, I want to thank the member churches and councils, ecumenical delegates and friends for their role in successfully conducting a participatory and dynamic 13th General Assembly in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia from 14-21 April 2010. Thank you, too, to the Council of Churches of Malaysia and its member churches and institutions for their generous hospitality, impressive logistics and efficient arrangements provided during the Assembly.

The Assembly has ended and gave birth to new beginnings in program mandates and directions, new Officers—the Presidents, Honorary Treasurer and General Secretary, new members of the General Committee, Executive Committee, and Program Area Committees. Congratulations and welcome to this God's project in Asia called CCA.

"Called to Prophecy, Reconcile and Heal" is the thematic mission that will propel the CCA for the next five years. The affirmations, reports, and statements from the pre-assemblies, and the program review and directions have been thoroughly discussed and passed. These will provide guidelines for revitalizing churches' mission through the ecumenical movement in Asia. These documents are already available in the CCA website - <http://www.cca.org.hk/13ga/index.htm>

CCA is called yet again to be faithful to the mandate given by the Assembly. The tasks are great and the people who were vested with the responsibility of carrying these through are called to a relevant ecumenical vision and a spirituality that sustains and nurtures our journey together. God calls us to break down barriers that divide, to heal broken lives, and to take care of the fallen and the marginalized, whom we refer to as the 'sinned against'. In keeping these tasks in mind, the mission of the Church in the Asian context needs to open new venues

that include all of God's people, the sinned against and the marginalized, in our plans and deliberations.

On the organizational side, the report on the CCA Review unravelled many impressive stories of the past 50 years. It pointed out some areas where the CCA was seen to have detracted from its ecumenical commitment in recent years. The Assembly endorsed the implementation of the Review recommendations into three stages: short-term (for immediate implementation); medium-term (for periodic review and timely implementation); and long-term (for further discussion and review by the General Committee, to be presented at the next General Assembly for action). These include strategic program directions, as well as structural and policy matters.

The time has also come for CCA to widen its boundaries and welcome those who are not within the CCA family, transcending our Christian identity to embrace people whose faiths and ideologies differ from us. Given the religious diversity and plurality in Asia, it is almost impossible to be involved in the work of justice, development and peace without the cooperation and the participation of all of God's people.

The world around us is filled with new challenges, paradigms, lifestyles and persuasions. The tasks before us are enormous and CCA cannot address them in isolation. This regional ecumenical movement will have to count on the active participation of its member churches and councils, ecumenical organizations and friends in Asia and beyond if it is to be faithful to its calling to be a prophetic, reconciling and healing presence in this part of the world.

Prawate Khid-am

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P.O. Box 183, Chiang Mai
Muang, Chiang Mai 50000 Thailand
Tel.: + 66 53 243906-7
Fax: + 66 53 247303
Email: cca@cca.org.hk
Website: www.cca.org.hk

Editor-in-Chief:
Prawate Khid-arn

Editorial Committee:
Moumita Biswas
Liza Lamis
Charlie Ocampo
Sung Kook Park



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*Front and backcover photos, AEC
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Taiwan.*

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Post-Assembly Reflections

The future of the Asian ecumenical movement

In our caring hands

Introduction

Two months after the 13th CCA General Assembly have passed but we still warmly remember the daily worship, Bible Studies, opening sermon, Niles Lectures, drama presentation, testimonies and the "Hypothetical" discussion - considered to be the



At work, The Rev. Dr. Rienzie Perera, Associate General Secretary (Finance and Relationship) served as Coordinator for the 13th CCA General Assembly. (Photo: Stephen Webb)

Assembly's high points. The outcomes of these challenged the Assembly and unpacked the theme, "Called to Prophecy, Reconcile and Heal".

The testimonies were moving experiences where several in the audience shed tears hearing them. It brought home the message that nothing is impossible with God, even to forgive those who killed your loved ones in front of your own eyes. It was also a witness to God's grace so powerful that it takes one through the pain and the cross to experience the resurrection via the soothing balm of God's grace of healing and forgiveness,

and even of being forgiven for one's sins.

The two-hour hypothetical discussion with a panel of seven persons attempted to take the Church from the known to the unknown, and to wrestle with questions and challenges posed by the complex and diverse contexts of Asia. The questions on racism, power, violence, democracy, patriarchy, etc. put forward by the moderator to the panelists were questions posed to the Church.

Some points for reflection

Bringing together 300 to 400 people under one roof is a daunting task. It is difficult to bring people of different ages, cultures and lifestyles and run an Assembly as we run a youth camp. CCA must evaluate and raise critical questions like what type of assemblies we should organize and how should it be facilitated. We should remember that when we gather at these assemblies we focus on the suffering people of Asia. There was a cry from some quarters that events of this nature should be simple and not detached from the suffering and struggling people of Asia.

How do we hold on to these aspects without sacrificing the minimum comfort of delegates who come from different backgrounds? As long as we hold assemblies of this size we are forced to look for hotels like what we had in Kuala Lumpur. They look luxurious but economical! This is not a justification to hold Assemblies in 3, 4 or 5 star hotels. It is simply to state the dilemma we are faced with as organizers.

For me the fundamental issue is not so much the venue but the structure of the Assembly. How long can we hold Assemblies of this size and what impact can we have through these large gatherings? Is the structure of having four Presidents, one Honorary Treasurer or a

twenty five-member General Committee viable for Asian churches? The vital question is how Asian churches can take responsibility to create a structure for the Asian ecumenical movement which will be owned, run and financially supported by the Asian churches.

Despite bringing a large number of people together only a handful make creative and constructive contributions to the Assembly deliberations. One reason may be the language facility and the inability to express thoughts in English. Often the desire or struggle is to get elected to committees or to become an officer of the CCA. We saw how two countries struggled it out to determine whose term it was to be on the Presidium. That disrupted the flow of assembly proceedings and when the decision was made through secret balloting to determine whose turn it is, the majority of the delegates from the country which lost decided to avoid participating in Assembly proceedings and went home.

Another major problem is that a large majority of those who are elected to serve on program area committees do not participate fully during the course of the five years and thereby allowing a few persons to rule and make decisions. Often when important concerns are raised via e-mail a handful or one or two will respond. Because of the silence of the majority a small minority makes decisions and runs the show. This is not what we want for the Asian ecumenical movement.

The critical issue is why don't Asian churches send their best to attend these meetings, especially those who have the capacity, passion and the commitment for ecumenism? Why is it that the majority of the delegates to the Assembly are often clergy and bishops and very few lay, women and youth? Is it

not possible to send delegates consisting of the experienced and the new, youth, women and men in order to give the best to the ecumenical movement in Asia? It is unfortunate to see that in some churches nepotism still continues and the best and resourceful people are left behind.

At the last Assembly some plenary sessions were chaotic and unruly because moderating the plenary was weak. We could have avoided this embarrassment had we elected the right people. We shall see whether we have learnt from past mistakes and elected the best and resourceful persons to represent our churches and countries to the committees of CCA for the next five years.

In spite of the fact that the 13th CCA General Assembly was well planned, some felt that the Assembly was too tight with a long program. However, many acknowledged that it provided the space and time to renew friendships and make new ones. It was also a time for joy and sadness, excitement and frustration, and a time to re-envision the ecumenical movement in Asia. Some even commented openly that the ecumenical movement in Asia, meaning the CCA and also the World Council of Churches, have lost their credibility and the inspiration to energize a new generation of Christians committed to work towards the values of the reign of God. Some reasons given were too much of dirty politics and recycling of staff. A lot can be said about this but not in this short article. The title of Michael Kinnamon's book, "The Vision of the Ecumenical Movement and How It Has Been Impoverished by Its Friends" is most insightful and prophetic for us.

Indeed, the future of the ecumenical movement in Asia now rests in our caring hands.

Rienzie Perera

The AEC journey

Twenty-one participants (11 women and 10 men) completed the Asian Ecumenical Course held in Seremban and Kuala Lumpur on 9-22 April 2010. They came from Aotearoa New Zealand, India, Indonesia, Korea, Malaysia, Myanmar, Pakistan, Philippines, Sri Lanka, Taiwan, Thailand, and Vietnam.

This year's AEC batch reflected on the CCA assembly theme, "Called to Prophesy, Reconcile and Heal" and went through the usual AEC components of analyzing Asian reality, sharing a wider ecumenical vision, experiencing community

on Malaysian and Asian realities; Dr. Hope S. Antone introduced the CCA and its wider ecumenical vision; Fr. Rex Reyes Jr. shared challenges to ecumenism in Asia; Rev. Dr. Albert Sundararaj Walters shared on Christian-Muslim relations in Malaysia; Mr. Jeffrey Phang shared some ecological concerns; Dr. Farouk Musa spoke on Islam and Minorities in Malaysia.

Dr. Rommel Linatoc facilitated the workshops on the use of arts in prophesying, reconciling and healing ministry. Ms. Christina Mandang, Rev. Dennis Raj and Rev. Vuluk Lai Chao-Tsai (members of the CCA General Assembly worship committee) also



2010 AEC participants in a creative arts workshop.

building and engaging in leadership training. They also participated actively in the 13th CCA General Assembly as animators during the daily worship. In the process they learned how elements from art and culture - e.g. singing, drama, movements, symbols - could be utilized for a more meaningful and contextual worship experience.

A team of resource persons gave inputs at the AEC: Rev. Dr. Joseph Komar, AEC dean, shared

helped the AEC in preparing to animate worship at the assembly.

Other guests who shared their experiences and some words of encouragement with the AEC were: Rev. Dr. H. S. Wilson of FTE-SEA, Rev. Dr. Dietrich Werner of WCC-ETE, Rev. Dr. A. Wati Longchar, Dr. Lim Swee Hong, Rev. Dr. Rienzie Perera and Dr. Prawate Khid-am.

Following are excerpts from some participants' evaluation of AEC:



I learned a lot about wider ecumenism in the Asian Ecumenical Course. I realized that ecumenism is not only about the movement which promotes the unity of the different denominations within Christianity, but also of the many religions, cultures, nations and all of creation. I also learned that being ecumenical includes the ministry of prophesying, reconciling and healing of all of God's creation. - **Mariiska Lauterboom (Indonesia)**

Ecumenism was a new topic for me because I never heard about this in my country. Ecumenism is a big challenge in Pakistan where the community tends to be rigid in its religious beliefs. - **Anita Sunil (Pakistan)**

The whole AEC experience allowed me to look into and appreciate the Asian within me. I came to appreciate my Asia-ness and in the process affirmed my identity as an Asian. Now I know why I act or behave in a certain way. I also came to know the commonalities I have with other young people in the AEC and in the assembly. - **Ariel Slagen (Philippines)**

I was overwhelmed by the diversity of participants in the AEC. The richness and diversity of cultures and languages, and feeling the hearts of all participants worshipping God their way were an experience to remember. At Seremban, I loved our preparing, participating, and working together as a team to accomplish something that was meaningful and powerful. At Kuala Lumpur, I loved seeing the fruits of the AEC's hard work in our drama and singing. It was purposeful and carried a powerful message. - **Poulima Salima (Aotearoa New Zealand)**

I've learned and experienced an Asian way of worshipping God ecumenically, using arts, music and dance, and which brings out the message of God in Asia. - **Charles Choy (Malaysia)**

In this age, churches should no longer debate about dogma or which denomination is the best. Churches should work together to keep peace, maintain justice, help the weak and oppressed, heal the suffering, and care for the environment. To bring this ecumenical vision is not easy because many churches are only thinking about themselves. - **Margaritiform Listyokusumadewi (Indonesia)**

The ecumenical experience from AEC is really unforgettable for me. It is God's will that we Christians regardless of our differences live in unity, love, and peace. It is also God's will that human beings are reconciled and healed no matter



what religious, cultural, economic background they come from. It is a wonderful thing that Christians cooperate with believers of other faiths to work for justice, peace, and righteousness in the society. In Asia, in general and in Vietnam, in particular, Christianity has long been considered by other believers as a western religion because they find our faith practice completely strange to our cultures. Asians give up all traditions and cultures once they become Christian. My country is very rich in culture and tradition. However, the church has not made use of this treasure because it has not contextualized its theology. I hope to help my congregation understand the benefit of using culture and tradition in worship so God will be praised and glorified in a very Vietnamese way. - **Le Ngoc Bich Ly (Vietnam)**

In focus

Even though we are from different countries, different cultures and different churches we can get things done because we have the same goal which is to serve the Lord. - **Parvada Chentaredo (Thailand)**

AEC was one of the most organized programs [that] I have ever experienced. Some of my unforgettable learnings are: (a) something of the cultures and traditions of other countries and the churches' role in prophesying, reconciling and healing ministry; (b) experiencing the ecumenical movement beyond

countries struggle with and the commonalities that we all struggle with as Asian countries. - **Jesusa Zena Caytap (Philippines)**

Hope Antone

All AEC photos are by Yuluk Lal Chao-Tsal, Taiwan.



the boundaries; (c) importance of art and creativity in worship; and (e) leadership quality. - **Tinumeron Ozukum (India)**

Understanding our faith demands understanding our own context. Knowing my context puts my feet on the ground and my perspective on the right way in dealing with the realities. The Malaysian realities helped me to understand realities that other

The 2010 AEC participants and resource persons with the Most Rev. Roger Adrian Herft, Archbishop of Perth, the Anglican Church of Australia, who was the homilist at the Opening Worship of the 13th CCA General Assembly.

Photos, previous page: Use of elements from art and culture makes for a more meaningful and contextual worship experience.

Redefining the Ecumenical Movement

A report from the People's Forum

The People's Forum, a CCA Pre-Assembly event held on 12-13 April 2010, opened with a Bible Study led by Rev. Rienzie Perera, drawing on passages from the books of Genesis, Exodus, Psalms, the Gospel of Luke and the Epistle to the Romans. The study highlighted an alternative vision of liberated life in all its fullness against the dominant cultures of the world. Dr. Perera challenged the churches with the words of St. Paul to the Romans - "Do not be conformed to the world but be transformed as followers of Christ."

Dr. M.P. Joseph's presentation followed, focused on the socio-political, cultural and economic contexts which CCA (EACC then) has responded to, as well as the future challenges before it. He called for the churches to be informed, transparent, accountable, responsible and self-critical in order to meet the challenge of the Gospel by being in solidarity with the most vulnerable, manifesting a life-transforming commitment. He traced the origins of the EACC as it identified with the marginalized and how that situation has changed. The churches are being co-opted within the discourses of empire, globalization, development, liberal democracy, and as a consequence, losing the real diakonia, and putting charity in its place. These insights prompted a very lively discussion and critical self analysis.

The ecumenical movement became complicit in empire-building and ecclesiastically techno-bureaucratic. The ecumenical movement is failing in its role of being the voice of the voiceless and in accompanying the poor and marginalized in their struggle. The Forum also felt that the abandonment of URM has resulted in alienating the grassroots

from the ecumenical movement. Absence of the poor in the ecumenical movement questions the very nature, purpose, meaning and existence of the movement itself. This also serves to reinforce the complicity of the ecumenical movement with the logic of empire-client relations. In the ever-changing context we live in, the ecumenical movement is called to re-define itself.

While the Forum acknowledged the success stories of the ecumenical movement in the past, it recognizes the need to define new paradigms of relating with the entire household of God, the Oikoumene.

Being prophetic demands of us to have a message that challenges the system that is based on greed, violence, and competition. The Forum participants affirmed and are committed to promote the message of justice, hope and love and particularly, the biblical notion of the fullness of life for all in the Oikoumene.

Asian churches are like the frog in the water that is slowly allowed to boil unaware of the rising temperature until it is too late. Even where there is recognition of the economic, social, political and cultural realities the church often fails to act in a timely manner. The activities of the churches are mostly limited to maintenance, self-preservation, accumulating wealth and enjoying privileges. The churches tend to avoid conflicts especially where their own interests may be put at risk. Consequently the churches are in danger of losing their identity and their reason for being. Confession of the churches' failures, discerning their roles and obedience to God's will are seen by the Forum as the ways to move forward.

The panel presenters discussed the following issues:

- Tourism and its negative impact on the economy and ecology;
- Myanmar report on URM and its work;
- Indian church's response to the ecological crisis and cross border peace initiatives in the Kashmir Valley;
- Peace for life in the Philippines situation with a personal testimony by Pastor Berlin Guerrero of the United Church of Christ in the Philippines about his abduction, torture, detention, imprisonment and ongoing threats to his life.
- The Ecumenical Forum for Korea's initiatives on re-unification;
- The issues of nuclear armament and its implications for global peace

The Forum identified and worked on three key areas:

- Peace Building in Highly Militarized Contexts of Korean Peninsula and Kashmir Valley
- Conflict and Human Rights in the Asia Region
- Churches' Engagement with People's Movements in the Context of Globalization

Freddy de Alwis

Participants to the People's Forum presenting their message at the 13th CCA General Assembly.



People's Forum Resolutions

WHEREAS, Kashmir and Korea are highly militarized; the 60-year-long conflict in these areas affect the regional and global security and peace; and have caused much human pain and suffering;

WHEREAS, national security states in many, if not all, countries in Asia fit the structure and serve well the interests of the empire and find expressions in the militarist and repressive regimes and gross human and civil rights violations including displacement of communities, forced migration, and refugee movement;

WHEREAS, the CCA has lost its engagement with basic communities and people's movements;

WHEREAS, the CCA has come to be dominated by ecclesial leadership and no longer hears the voices of the marginalized;

WHEREAS, issues of migrant workers and globalized labor are continuing major concerns of CCA constituent members;

NOW THEREFORE,

BE IT RESOLVED that CCA explore ways to create its capacity to support its constituent members to engage in significant efforts for peace-building, peace processes and peace negotiations;

RESOLVED further, that CCA continues and develops ecumenical pastoral visits incorporating fact-finding, study and solidarity missions and provide support to constituent members to protect victims of human rights violations, displaced persons, refugees, and other sanctuary-seekers;

RESOLVED further, that CCA strengthens the peace initiatives of NCC India and NCC Pakistan and further facilitates their cooperation with each other in relation to supporting the interests of the people living in the Kashmir Valley;

RESOLVED further, that CCA takes appropriate steps to ensure that issues related to Kashmir and Korea Peninsula are significant agenda items at the 2013 WCC Assembly in Pusan, South Korea;

RESOLVED further, that CCA encourages the member churches and organizations to support Korean Ecumenical Forum and other similar initiatives that promote trust and understanding between North and South Korea;

RESOLVED further, that CCA engages in addressing the problems faced by migrant workers and by bringing together constituents already engaged in programs helping migrant workers;

RESOLVED further, that CCA reclaims its involvement in transformational grassroots organizing with basic sectors as once reflected in the programs of Urban Rural Mission (URM);

RESOLVED finally, that CCA promotes a critical discussion on the dominant development paradigm and the co-option of the churches and chart directions for a new approach.

Prophets, healers and reconcilers

Seventy (70) women church leaders from around Asia, Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand attended the CCA Women's Pre-Assembly Forum held on 10-13 April, in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

The participants shared and listened to stories of suffering and pain, celebrated the lives of modern-day women prophets, healers and reconcilers; wove their experiences and stories with those of the women of the Bible; and also listened to stories of men and their engagement with gender issues. The stories shared, in all their pain and brokenness, exposed all that breaks and causes pain. The same stories enabled and inspired healing of broken bodies and broken communities to rise together in celebration of life.

The participants' affirmed:

- That women are vulnerable but not weak; a minority but not insignificant; broken but not crushed;
- Women's traditional roles as healers, prophets and reconcilers, and their continuing perseverance

Women delegates presenting their message at the 13th CCA General Assembly.

to work for peace today;

- Women's work in developing partnerships toward genuine equality and freedom;
- Women's roles in prophetically denouncing the evils of violence that oppressed and marginalized women for a long time;
- Women's leadership must be made visible and recognized in all areas of life of the ecumenical movement, and that the ecumenical movement must mainstream gender equity and women's empowerment.

The participants recommended:

- That CCA reclaims its history of theological engagement by imagining new contextual theologies that address the issues of militarism, violence, patriarchy, ecological and economic injustices. That these new ways of imagining God in our times affirm the sacredness of the earth and the body, and see the building of communities of justice as central to the faith of Christians in Asia;





Weaving the tapestry of liberation. Participants of the pre-assembly forum at a creative workshop on healing and art therapy.

- That CCA develop, adopt and implement sexual harassment policies and encourage member churches and councils to do the same;
- That CCA develop, adopt and implement a gender policy, gender auditing, gender planning, gender budgeting, and encourage member churches and councils to do the same;
- That CCA commit and encourage member churches and councils to stand together in solidarity to eliminate all forms of violence against women and children;
- That CCA encourage member churches and councils to engage in ecumenical formation and advocacy for restorative and transformative justice, and to promote a healing ministry with survivors and perpetrators of sex and human trafficking industries;
- That CCA, through its member churches and councils, promote ecumenical formation for women's sexual and reproductive health justice, and create a community of healers and reconcilers;
- That CCA affirm the special and unique place held by Indigenous Peoples and Dalits in Asia, Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand. Further, that the CCA
- commits to stand in solidarity with the Indigenous Peoples and Dalits in their struggles against discrimination and injustice, and encourage member churches and councils to do the same;
- That CCA develop a partnership in mission between CCA and the member churches and councils, and among church women in sharing resources and relating to each other;
- That CCA further develop and strengthen partnerships with like-minded and faith-based organisations to address gender justice issues.

Moumita Biswas

Discerning God's will

The Ninth General Assembly of the United Church of Christ in the Philippines, which met 25-29 May 2010 at Silliman University Church in Dumaguete City, elected Rev. Reuel Norman O. Marigza as its new General Secretary, effective 1 June 2010. During his installation at the closing worship of the assembly, Marigza was also consecrated bishop of the UCCP.

Reflecting on the Ninth General Assembly theme for the next quadrennium, "Discerning and Obeying God's Will in These Critical Times," Marigza, in his inaugural message, reminded the

all the rest can be secondary."

Expounding the idea of one body in Romans 12:5 ("we are individually members of one another"), Marigza said, "instead of competing with each other, we should be completing each other." This means, he said, that the church must have all elements of an apostolic ministry, a prophetic ministry, an evangelistic ministry, a pastoral ministry and a teaching ministry.

Addressing the negative propaganda that human rights and peace advocates from the UCCP are subjected to when

Outgoing General Secretary Bishop Eleazar M. Pascua (left) and incoming General Secretary Bishop Reuel Norman O. Marigza (right).



assembly of their being called "to be diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. We have to work out the unity of the church amidst and in spite of our differences."

Referring to differences among UCCP members that have led to divisions, Marigza reminded the assembly that "what binds us together are higher levels of unity, that are essential and constitutive of the core of our faith: one body and one Spirit, one hope, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Parent of all who is over all and through all and in all. If we can hold on to these,

engaging in prophetic ministry, Marigza asserted: "If to proclaim release to the captives is to be called a communist, so be it. If to give sight to the blind so they can see the dire reality we are facing is to be branded communist, so be it. If to set at liberty those who are oppressed is to be called communist, so be it. I'd rather be called a communist and do something to live out what the Scripture demands than be silent and do nothing but pass by like the priest and the Levite. We are not free to select only the safe biblical passages; we are called to be prophetic as well. I'd rather be true to my Lord and Master than cower in the

face of powers that would continue to oppress and dominate our people. God hears the cries of his people, so should we! Whoever comes and tries to intrude into the affairs of the Church, we will dare say: We will not bow the knee! Jesus is Lord and Jesus only!"

At the opening worship, time was given to remembering the victims of human rights abuses, many of whom are UCCP church workers and lay leaders. They are victims of illegal detention, disappearances and summary killings, and name-tagging as communists for their work for peace with justice.

The 51-year old Marigza is a lecturer at Silliman University Divinity School in Dumaguete City. He served as executive staff of the National Council of Churches in the Philippines' Commission on Youth

Another highlight of the assembly was the 62nd anniversary celebration of UCCP. Outgoing chairperson Atty. Joel Bodegon gave the anniversary address and a drama-musical was performed on the history and journey of the UCCP.

Each day of the assembly started with creative worship and biblico-theological reflections on various sub-themes led by Rev. Dr. Noriel Capulong, on discernment; Ms. Jurgette Honculada and Dr. Jurgenne Honculada Primavera (twin sisters), on repentance; Rev. Luna Dingayan, on obedience; and Rev. Dr. Levi Oracion, on new being in Christ.

A panel on the global situation was shared by Rev. Dr. Levi Oracion from North America, Dr. Hope Antone from Christian Conference of Asia, and Dr. Fidon Mwombeki from the United



Panel on Global Situation, from left to right: Rev. Dr. Levi Oracion on North America, Rev. Dr. Noriel Capulong (Bible study leader on discernment), Dr. Hope S. Antone on Asia, and Dr. Fidon Mwombeki (General Secretary of United Evangelical Mission) on Europe and Africa.

and Student Ministry and as member of the CCA Youth Committee. He was also a resource person at the CCA Youth Pre-Assembly in April in Kuala Lumpur.

The Ninth UCCP General Assembly elected other officers for the next quadrennium: Helen Grace Paris, chairperson; Nicanor Primavera, Jr., vice chairperson; Karl Chan, treasurer; Jose Alfon, auditor; and seven jurisdictional bishops: Dulce Pia Rose, Melzar Labuntog, Arturo Asi, Modesto Villasanta, Roel Mendoza, Jaime Moriles, and Elorde Sambat.

Evangelical Mission. The national situationer was given by Prof. Leonor Briones.

Prior to the assembly proper, the youth, women and men held their separate conferences. A group of theologians also gathered for a consultation on the theology of struggle, a name coined for theologizing from and on the struggle for human dignity in the Philippines.

Hope S. Antone

2010 World Environment Day reflections

Mending and caring for creation

World Environment Day is celebrated on 5th June every year. This year's reflection will focus on climate change and migration and their impact and implications for Asia. The message also carries information/statistics relevant to our region.

Why celebrate World Environment Day?

The World environment Day was established by the UN General Assembly in 1972 at the Stockholm Conference on Human Environment. By focusing on the environment on this day, the UN tries to give a human face to environmental issues to empower people to become active agents of sustainable and equitable development. It is also an attempt to promote an understanding that communities are pivotal to changing attitudes towards environmental issues and advocate partnership which will ensure all nations and peoples enjoy a safer and more prosperous future.

The world has reached a crisis point because of the neglect and damage done by humans to the environment. Because of the irresponsible behavior of nations, communities and individuals, the global temperature has already risen to 0.6 % and the global increase in CO2 emissions is a major cause for the rise in temperature. Already, weather-related disasters are piling up in Asia and much worse is expected unless human behavior and attitudes towards the environment undergoes radical change. It is also frightening to hear that the per capita water availability will decline by 30% in South Asia. This will have a drastic effect and will result in people and animals being forced to move from place to place in search for water. It will also lead to a clash of humans and the rest of God's creation. Climate specialists have also pointed out that the Himalayan glacier will melt due to the rise in temperature which will lead to the rise in sea level, storm, floods, tidal waves and will cause erosion of coastal areas. These climatic aberrations are already taking place and generations after us will be faced with more environmental catastrophes if humans do not repent and take responsibility for our environment. We are all called to be good stewards of God's creation.

Vulnerabilities in Asia

The Asian region is the world's most prone to environmental hazards and disasters. Asians are beginning to realize that most of the environmental disasters are linked either directly or indirectly to climate

change. Coastal vulnerability due to rise in sea-level including overflow from river banks, storm, cyclones and floods impacts many countries in our region.

South Asia. The impact of climate change will see the rise in sea-level which will pose a threat to areas along the Bay of Bengal and the Arabian Sea, including the delta areas of the Ganges-Brahmaputra, the Mahanadi, Godavari, Krishna, and the Indus rivers. Bangladesh, parts of India such as West Bengal, and coastal areas along Chennai, Mumbai, southern Pakistan and the coasts of Karachi are prone to large coastal flooding



We all have to repent and reconcile with creation and make a fresh commitment to protect it as we protect our lives. Life-giving symbols used at the morning worship services during the 13th CCA General Assembly.

and cyclones.

Northeast Asia. Taipei, Taiwan, Hong Kong, China, Japan, and Korea in the Northeast region of Asia are already experiencing significant environmental hazards largely associated with flooding in densely populated regions. The coastal flooding, lack of water in the west, and cyclones are some of the problems people in this part of Asia are faced with. Some of the other problems

they face are due to the fact that many people live in the low elevation coastal zone, leaving them vulnerable to the rise in sea level, especially if associated with cyclones.

Southeast Asia. Several climate change hazards have been identified in parts of Indonesia, the Philippines, Thailand, and Vietnam. The rise in sea-level, storms and floods are great concerns for low-lying deltas including those along the Mekong, Red, and Irrawaddy Rivers. The main rate of sea-level rise in coastal areas over the last 50 years was recorded at 2.5 millimeter per year, just over the average rate of the global sea level rise.

Future Implications

Unless prevention facilities and plans are carefully prepared, the annual economic losses due to various hazards associated with sea level rise are anticipated,



including a decline of around 20 million metric tons (25%) in rice production and over 30 million metric tons in wheat (30%) over 2000-2050. This could create significant pressure for rural to urban migration, both permanent and temporary.

Reflections

Humans often think they are the masters of God's creation and that God has placed them within the creation

with the command to subdue and rule everything within creation. Even the Scripture is misquoted to justify this position (read Genesis 1:28 and Psalm 8). Today, several biblical scholars and others revisit these texts and similar other texts in attempts to place the humans in their rightful place not as lords but as stewards and caretakers of God's creation.

Centuries of human misbehavior and the use of science and technology to abuse the creation and its resources cause our Planet Earth to weep and groan (Romans 8:18-25). This groaning comes to us especially from the voices of the poor and the deprived. When we see victims of poverty, drought, floods, cyclones (Nargis), tsunamis, we experience the groaning and weeping of God's creation. God does not will his people to experience these catastrophes. It is the human misbehavior which causes most of these events victimizing the poor and marginalized by the sins of the rich and the powerful. We need to re-imagine our understanding of God as "All Mighty and All Powerful." Triumphalism has to be replaced with the theology of the Cross, which is a symbol of Jesus undergoing pain and rejection for our sins. In a similar way the marginalized, the poor and the vulnerable are being "sinned against."

It is with the same understanding that we need to re-read the scriptures and discern what is happening to God's created order. Do we see God weeping and groaning in and through the victims of the environment rather than the mighty and a crusading Creator?. Therefore, the present plight of the world and the state of the environment is a judgment on humanity and exposes the human sin of turning away from God, our environment and ourselves.

This calls us to repentance, which is not an individual act. It is a collective act which has to have the engagement of all of God's people irrespective of their faith perspectives. All of us have sinned against the creation and therefore we all have to repent and reconcile with creation and make a fresh commitment to protect it as we protect our lives. It is also in this context that we need to read the words of St. Paul "... since all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God..." (Romans 3: 23).

To commit to the work of restoration and care of the environment we have to transcend all barriers and work as God's children belonging to one whole family of the universe. All religions, including Christianity have within them a spirituality to detach from greed and accumulation. The entire world needs to embrace that spirituality if we are truly committed to save the planet and our Mother Earth.

Freddy de Alwis

Celebrating Asia Sunday in Tokyo

Healing the wounds of war

Reflecting on the CCA Assembly theme, "Called to Prophecy, Reconcile and Heal," Charlie Ocampo, CCA Joint Executive Secretary for Justice, International Affairs, Development and Service, expounded on the Nazareth Manifesto found in Luke 4:18-19, which he confessed had inspired him and many young student-activists in the Philippines in the 1970s.



Charlie Ocampo preaching at the Asia Sunday service, with Rev. Hiroko Ueda of NCC Japan, translating.

In his message, he named the captives in the Japanese society today - lured by the corporate sector for profit and productivity - the enticing goods offered by the market that people want to consume to gain acceptance and status, the young people with their loud music and penchant for cyberspace and the internet, the women who still do not have equal access to opportunities as their men counterparts, and the children who are being hurried along growing up in a frenetic world where human worth is equated with the demands of holding and keeping jobs.

From the stories of his grandmother, Charlie spoke of the atrocities committed by soldiers of the Japanese Imperial Army against Filipinos, the suffering of Filipino comfort women and the disruption of work and community life foisted on his parents during the three years of the Japanese occupation of Manila. In the 1980s, however, he was witness to ecumenical exchanges and solidarity support offered by Japanese Christians to Filipinos, of Japanese unions supporting the striking banana plantation workers in Mindanao, and the strong solidarity and accompaniment offered by the Japanese Christians to Filipinos suffering under the Martial Law years of President Marcos. The wounds of war were healing as the Japanese people extended support and care to Filipino victims of war and are suffering under a dictatorial government.

He challenged the Japanese Christians to keep the prophetic tradition alive in Japan and elsewhere and to strive to be reconcilers and healers to those who are wounded and suffering and those who find themselves excluded from society.

The Asia Sunday service was held in a Kyodan Church in the Shinjuku district of Tokyo, followed by a report from delegates, observers, and a youth steward at the 13th CCA Assembly in Kuala Lumpur. They summed up the challenges and future possibilities that inspired them in Assembly and they shared these with representatives of CCA member churches present at the service.

Ocampo also made courtesy visits and met with Rev. Tomeyuki Naito, General Secretary of the United Church of Christ in Japan (Kyodan), Rev. John Makito Aizawa, General Secretary of the Anglican Communion in Japan (Nippon Sei Ko Kai) and their staff responsible for ecumenical relations and ministries. He also had a meeting with Mr. Yoichi Noguchi, Executive Director of the Niwano Peace Foundation, to follow up on the Article 9 campaign and matters of peace and development in northeast Asia. At the lunch, hosted by Mr. Noguchi, Ocampo was joined by Rev. Hiroko Ueda, NCCJ General Secretary and Mr. Zen Koike, a staff of NCCJ assisting with regional and international issues.

Charlie Ocampo

Affirming peace, resisting empire

What do cultural activists, women and church leaders who gathered at the Union Theological Seminary (UTS) in New York have in common? They are all seeking peace by resisting the political, economic and cultural domination that disempower people, curtail their rights and prevent sovereignty.

The World Without Empire Conference and Peace Festival took place in New York on 23-25 May 2010. Music, testimonies and building alliances took place in the august halls of UTS at the heart of New York's bustling metropolis. This time, New York hosted the fourth of the series of gatherings which were previously held in Bogota, Seoul, and Davao in the Philippines.

A peace festival was held in the afternoon of May 24 where different perspectives on resistance were presented, including Spirituality Within the Empire, Turning Education as Tool of Resistance, Media Literacy, Resistance and Complicity. Workshops on dance, music and the spoken word as tools for resistance capped the day's events.

Carmencita Karagdag, Peace for Life (PFL) Coordinator, explained the objectives of the Conference. She said that the US is really somehow at the center of Empire, even as she welcomed the invitation of academics, churches and cultural activists to host the gathering.

Eunice Santana, PFL Moderator and former President



The PFL
Continuing
Committee

Themes of the two-day gathering include: The Empire Strikes - In Women's Voices; Militarism and Empire; Building Alliances; The United States of Exception (in a fishbowl setting); Action Perspectives (First Voices Indigenous Radio, Women's Forum for Peace, Student Christian Movement, Mosque of Islamic Brotherhood, and United Theological College/India); and Bearing Witness (South Africa's University of Pretoria and the Drew University Theological School).

Among the presenters were Althea Spencer Miller, Emmi de Jesus, Metropolitan Geevarghese Mor Coorilos, Junaid Ahmad, Lilia Solano, Ulrich Duchrow, Allan Boesak, David Wildman, Peter Heltzel, Nimalka Fernando, Evangeline Rajkumar, Maake Masango, and Elizabeth Tapia. The panel presentations were moderated by Omega Bula, Eunice Santana, Christopher Ferguson, Chung Hyun Kyung, and Luciano Kovacs.

of the World Council of Churches spoke of "domination" as a "contradiction to Christianity and the message of Christ, which is not to dominate but to love one another... and to consider everyone as children of God, created in the image of God."

Charlie Ocampo, representing CCA, also participated in a meeting of the Continuation Committee, where the organizers noted that the gathering did not have adequate inter-faith participation, as well as institutional representation from the US. The Committee will do a follow through of the New York participants, and has noted the significant potential of involving the immigrant communities in future events. There was also seen a need to seriously link study and meetings in the future and to network (liaise) with the Kairos Palestine movement and to participate in the forthcoming International Ecumenical Peace Convocation to be held in Kingston, Jamaica in May, 2011.

Charlie Ocampo

New CCA leaders at the helm



Rev. Rex R.B. Reyes, Jr., President. The Rev. Rex R.B. Reyes, Jr., an Anglican priest, is currently the General Secretary of NCC Philippines, the first indigenous person to hold that position. He was formerly the Program Secretary for Christian Unity and Ecumenical Relations of NCC Philippines, and taught Ecumenics at St. Andrew's Theological Seminary, an Anglican seminary in Quezon City, Philippines.

Mr. Augustine Karmakar, Honorary Treasurer. Mr Augustine Karmakar holds a masters degree in accounting from the University of Dhaka and is a partner in a chartered accountants firm. He is currently the honorary general secretary of the Church of Bangladesh and a member of the NCC Bangladesh Executive Committee. He has been honorary treasurer of NCCB and of the national council of the YMCA.

He is keen to develop the accounting and financial management system of CCA and find creative means to raise funds in addition to promoting CCA Sunday and focusing on members' contributions.



Rev. Ms Retno Ngapon, President. The Rev. Ms Retno Ngapon is 28 years old and a pastor of the Pasundan Christian Church in Jakarta, Indonesia. She is currently the Moderator of the Jakarta district of GKP (Gereja Kristen Pasundan) consisting of 12 local congregations. (Photo: Pasundan Christian Church)

Rev. Dr. Henriette Hutabarat Lebang, General Secretary.

Rev. Dr. Henriette Hutabarat Lebang hails from Sulawesi, Indonesia, and brings to CCA a rich ecumenical background and work experience. An education doctorate holder, Dr Hutabarat Lebang was ordained in 1992 and has served in many senior positions in Asia and internationally. She served as CCA Associate General Secretary for Programme Coordination from October 1991 to 2000, and was also a member of the CCA General Committee in 2005 to 2010.

Currently she is chair of the Communion of Churches in Indonesia (PGI); Vice President of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC); member of the Joint Working Group of the World Council of Churches and the Pontifical Council for Christian Unity of the Roman Catholic Church; and director of the Institute of Theology of the Toraja Church in Indonesia.



Dr. Kali Bahadur Rokaya, President.

Dr. Kali Bahadur Rokaya is General Secretary of NCC Nepal, lay pastor of Sagarmatha Church, Vice-President of the Interreligious Council of Nepal, National Coordinator of Nepal Intellectuals' Forum, and Member of the National Human Rights Commission.

He is part of the Concern Movement for Human Rights and is founding member of the University of Christian Students Fellowship. He is married to Draupadi and has two sons.

Ms. Van Arunrasmey, President.

Formerly the Vice Chair of the Kampuchea Christian Council (KCC) and Chair of its Women's Committee, Ms Van Arunrasmey is currently its acting General Secretary.



Theology, mission and structures

UCC looks to the future

Seventy members (70) of the United Church of Canada's General Council Executive met for the second time in the 2009-2012 triennium on 1-3 May 2010 in Toronto.

outside the UCC;

- *Prioritizing and rationalizing mission support grants, effective by 2011, grants to global partners, and including grants to theological schools;*



The GCE at worship

A major agenda item for the meeting was planning for the future of the UCC, following a process of consultation with all its constituencies. The consultation process provided venues for addressing challenges in the areas of governance, the UCC's theology based on the 20 Articles of Faith, the priority themes affirmed by the 40th General Council, moving on into the future and letting go of old notions of what it means to be the United Church of Canada.

The GCE meets in May and November of every year for three years between 2009 and 2012. Charlie Ocampo, CCA Joint Executive Secretary for Justice, International Affairs, Development and Service (JID), is a corresponding member of the GCE, representing global partners.

Details of the recommendations have been submitted by the General Secretary to the members of the Executive in the report, "Preparing for a Future Grounded in Faith and Action." Option 4 includes the following actions, which were passed by GCE:

- *Reducing staff positions at the General Council Office by 15 to 20 (out of 160), in addition to implementing other cost-saving measures;*
- *Realigning staff structures at the General Council Office to support identity and connection inside and*

- *Consulting with presbyteries and conferences to develop plans to shift responsibilities for pastoral relations from presbyteries to conferences;*
- *Working with chairs of permanent committees to clarify and define roles of the courts of the Church, as set out in Option 2;*
- *Putting in place measures for recruitment, identification, and support of ministry personnel, focusing on a diverse new generation of leadership and including active support and removal of barriers;*
- *Creating the Centre for Ministry Development, which services will include training and consulting for congregational and new ministry development;*
- *Establishing and launching a New Ministries Fund and the United Cares Fund;*
- *Developing a major Legacy Campaign that fills up the new directions, as well as the established work of the UCC; and,*
- *Initiating an expanded People in Partnership Program that will link UCC communities with global and Canadian partners for shared engagement in mission.*

A worship service was capped by the Eucharist on Monday, May 3rd.

Charlie Ocampo

Listening with my heart

The Forum of People Living with HIV (PLWHIV) held on 11-13 April 2010 in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia was a huge success, judging by the active participation of PLWHIV+, NGOs, theologians, lay church leaders and other HIV and AIDS activists from across Asia. The Forum went beyond rhetoric to providing a hospitable community where PLWHIVs shared their experiences on what it means to be HIV positive and how we can mitigate its impact among key populations at higher risk.

Theologians and other experts presented different papers, highlighting infection prevalence rates of different countries, issues of vulnerability of different population groups and how to tackle the AIDS scourge from practical and theological perspectives. It was a privilege for me to have attended the Forum because it helped me understand the HIV and AIDS situation in Asia, and know about the responses undertaken to control its spread.

I learned from and interacted with some HIV and AIDS activists in Asia through formal and informal conversations. The most impressive aspect of the Forum was the time set aside for HIV+ participants to share their moving stories with the whole group in a loving and congenial atmosphere. For me that was a powerful moment because by sharing

their stories they allowed us to move away from intellectual discourse to a tangible experience of particular contexts of vulnerability, pain and the crushing effect of stigma and discrimination.

My participation in this Forum has helped me to develop my listening skills - listening with my heart - in order to be able to cope with some of the contextual challenges of working with Amity Foundation, China. The trajectory of the epidemic and the socio-political reality of China, like any other country, means there is a need to adopt culturally-sensitive and appropriate HIV prevention strategies for groups at higher risks of infection and PLWHIV+. To control the spread of HIV and AIDS, I see the need for the ecumenical movement in Asia to address stigma and discrimination.

Asian Churches have a rich resource from their culture and faith traditions to deal with this problem. Another area that needs urgent attention is a functional HIV and AIDS prevention education that will help dispel myths, reduce ignorance, and help key population groups to identify factors of their vulnerability and how to protect themselves against infection.

Safiya Doma



Dr Safiya O. Doma (right), with Yong Tingjin of the Asian Women's Resource Centre for Culture and Theology (AWRC). Safiya, a United Evangelical Mission (UEM) ecumenical co-worker, is the HIV and AIDS project consultant for Amity Foundation, a Chinese NGO that is involved in HIV and AIDS work in China. Amity works in the areas of HIV prevention, care and support, training of village doctors to meet grassroots medical needs of the people and self support activities for people and families affected by HIV and AIDS.

We are the youth

We are the youth, the warm bodies moving and creating visions for a world where peace and justice reign. We are the seedlings of hope, and the willing and capable leaders of today. Enthusiasm, mirth and creativity run deep in our blood.

The CCA's Youth Pre-Assembly Forum has become one of the venues for Asian youth to express and share our joys, dreams and vision, to offer our talents, and to tell our realities and dreams to the Christian Churches in and around Asia. Although coming from different walks in life, countries and denominations, we, the youth have always mastered the spirit of solidarity wherever we go. We have internalized within us the spirit of friendship, as well as openness to various people and contexts that made the whole Pre-Assembly Forum enriching, full of learning, and, of course, fun.

The Pre-Assembly Forum has allowed a lot of space in discussing the realities and basic issues that Asian young people are experiencing. As young people, we are called to witness each other's realities, realizing that we are encountering similar issues only of different context, and locations.

We realised that militarisation, human rights violations, wars of aggression, and poverty are common dividing walls in the people of Asia that left most of its women, youth and children marginalized and exploited. Reclaiming our space and voice in the midst of uncertainties, we found our presence in the struggle.

The Pre-Assembly has given 38 young people coming from Aoteroa-New Zealand, Australia, Bangladesh, Cambodia, Hong Kong, India, Indonesia, Iran, Japan, Korea, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan, Philippines, Sri Lanka, Taiwan, Thailand, Timor Leste the chance to mingle and critically reflect on the role of the young people, as well as create ties and solidarity with the young people all over Asia.

It was also a chance for us to know that young as we are, we are part of a bigger family and sacred calling in the ecumenical movement. The Pre-Assembly gave us the chance to glimpse at what to do and expect during the assembly proper. Ultimately, it has also provided the young people with a perspective on ecumenism.

Visiting the history of ecumenism was affirming and inspiring, and having met church leaders, bishops, priests and pastors who have significantly contributed to the ecumenical movement when they were young once.

Being a youth in these times poses a lot of challenges. It is high time for us to rekindle our passion towards mending the whole inhabited earth. It is time to open our eyes and to critically assess present realities in connection with the past, as well as with what our vision should be. We have to possess the power of imagination and to collectively imagine the kind of future that we want, a future guided by love, peace and justice, and anchored on the prayer of Jesus "that all may be one."



Ithiana Lawrence; Sarah Joy Malar; Johanna May Cantor de la Cruz; Adam Anand Row; Audrey Joyce Nelson. Johanna is a Methodist youth leader representing the Philippines to the 2010-2015 CCA General Committee. Currently Johanna is Assistant Program Secretary (for Youth), of the Ecumenical Education and Nurture unit of the National Council of Churches in the Philippines.

CCA is an important partner of the youth in fulfilling our dream of Shalom. As your young people, we will always be ready to offer our time, energy and creativity for the ecumenical vision. To fulfill this vision, the youth should step forward and be recognized as a potent force in the transformation of church and society. In the CCA programs and processes, the youth deserve space and nurturing, if not priority in the decisions.

We are the youth. We celebrate our uniqueness as young people in Asia called to serve and to contribute towards a community of peace. We are your young partners called to prophesy, reconcile and heal.

Johanna May Cantor de la Cruz

A youthful wish

Mutually shared leadership

Verily, participating in the 13th CCA General Assembly is a life transforming experience. Everyday, we were empowered through the worship, using different media, art forms and symbols. Thanks to the creative worship team led by Hope Antone. The Bible Studies during the Morning Prayers and testimonies during the Evening Prayers truly inspired us. The worship was made more participative by the congregational singing led by Christina Mandang. Thanks to Vuluk Lai for his relevant and beautiful paintings. And who would want to miss the daily edition of Berita Terkini, published by the Media Team?

To be very honest, the CCA General Assembly was exhausting because of the long daily schedule that delegates had to endure. But I have always looked forward to hearing the public lectures delivered by leading ecumenical leaders; lectures which I found very enriching. I have enjoyed the workshops. I have intently listened to every report, and have followed closely the discussions. With the pile of papers I brought home, I also carried with me fond memories of my very rich Kuala Lumpur Assembly experience.

Perhaps, my most unforgettable and memorable moment at the Assembly was during the business session on the Nominations Committee report. It was suspended several times. Participants, especially the youth and the women, have actively expressed that the composition of the General Committee and the Program Area Committees be changed to ensure gender balance. The women and youth disliked the gender ratio of 14:7. The youth have expressed that they will not settle with only 6 youth members in the 21-member General Committee.

In retrospect, I would like to think that the election exercise was a test for us. I felt frustrated that the nomination exercise was a disempowering process. During the plenary, the youth and women have tearfully voiced out their dreams for a gender-balanced General Committee and Program Area Committees, no matter how small or soft those voices were. But the Assembly, eventually, did not heed our voice. Perhaps, we are still reluctant to put our theology into practice.

I think the election exercise was a challenge to our men church leaders to let go of their lust for power, and to share the ecumenical leadership with the youth and women. I hope that in the next Assembly a new era of ecumenical movement in Asia is ushered in with a leadership that is mutually shared and truly representative of all those committed to a common ecumenical vision.

Tong Wing Sze



Tong Wing Sze, with the new CCA General Secretary, Rev. Dr. Henrietta Hutabarat Lebang. Ms Tong was a youth delegate to the 13th CCA General Assembly from Hong Kong. She is also a member of the Program Area Committee for Ecumenical Formation, Gender Justice and Youth Empowerment for 2010-2015.

A platform of the voiceless

Prior to the 13th CCA General Assembly, the People's Forum met to hear the voices of the voiceless in Asia and to bring those voices to the Assembly. The voices made it clear that, first, the ecumenical movement has become more of a techno-bureaucratic institution than a movement of the oppressed and the exploited people. Second, the people bear the pain and suffer much in the context of globalisation and the militarisation of



The Rev. Prince Devnandan is a presbyter of the Methodist Church of Aotearoa New Zealand, and a member of the CCA General Committee.

civil society in Asia. The Assembly theme, "Called to prophesy, reconcile and heal is a reminder that we are the 'Jesus people' and that we are called to do the 'Jesus ministry' of ministering to the crucified and bleeding people of Asia.

Walter Brueggemann describes the abundant life Jesus brought and the lack of generosity and prophecy to work towards it in the following:

*Jesus has come that we may have an abundant life. His feeding narratives attest that the generosity of God is assured wherever Jesus rules in the earth and we count on that generosity. And that means, does it not, that our common practices of greed, of the pursuit of consumer goods, of the frantic effort to acquire more, are both inappropriate and unnecessary. Our society hungers always for more: more body surgery, more cosmetics, more cars,

more beer, more sex, more certitude, more security, more money, more power, more oil... whatever. This hunger for more is a true sign that we do not trust the goodness of God to supply all of our needs; we do not trust that the generous rule of Jesus who has ascended to power is in effect. But we, we are Jesus people, and therefore we are pledged and empowered to act differently, differently in the neighbourhood, differently in the economy, and as citizens of the last superpower, differently in the world". (Walter Brueggemann, *Mandate to Difference: An invitation to the Contemporary Church*, 2007)

What Brueggemann says is true of almost every part of the world. Those who go for more are accumulating more for themselves by exploiting the disempowered and the powerless.

Prophet Jeremiah spoke against this kind of economic exploitation in his time: "For from the least to the greatest of them, everyone is greedy for unjust gain; and from prophet to priest, everyone deals falsely. They have treated the wound of my people carelessly, saying, "Peace, peace," when there is no peace. They acted shamefully, they committed abomination; yet they were not ashamed, they did not know how to blush. Therefore they shall fall among those who fall; at the time that I punish them, they shall be overthrown, says the Lord." (NRSV, Jeremiah 6:13-15)

Jeremiah's description of wealth accumulation as unjust gain has turned violent. Defence spending in many parts of the world and in Asia in particular is not to provide security to the citizens but to protect the interests of the greedy who want to acquire more. The outcome of this greed is more people being pushed to the depths of poverty. It is those people, the Jesus people who are crucified and left bleeding to death. It is in this community of Jesus people we need to prophesy, reconcile and heal.

In the opening Bible Study, Rev. Dr. Rienzie Perera challenged the churches with the words of St. Paul to the Romans: "Do not be conformed to the world, but be transformed as followers of Christ." He highlighted an alternative vision that is not conformed to the prevailing world order. Our call to prophesy, reconcile and heal is not in conformity to the world of consumerism that encourages having more, but calls for a transformation towards God's generosity. The dominant culture of the world today goes after the greed-driven and wealth collecting consumerism. The one who does not conform to this culture and order becomes 'the other'.

When the Jesus people take a stand for God's reign in which they obey God, they become nonconformist to the dominant culture. The People's Forum heard, understood and realised that it is not possible to be conformed to the dominant culture and be a prophet for the kingdom of God. Dr. M.P. Joseph in his Bible Study spoke about the socio-political, cultural and economic contexts in which the CCA was established. He highlighted the fact that the churches have become conformists to the dominant culture in relation to wealth accumulation. What he did not say is that the churches have become instruments of promoting globalisation and empire-building.

Dr. Joseph's concern was that the diakonia of the Jesus people is being replaced by charity. In reality, charity dished out by multi-national corporations does not benefit the people. In this context, a prophet of the Jesus people has to prophesy against the so-called charitable organisations and call them to celebrate God's generosity in terms of diakonia instead of dishing out a handful for the needy.

The voices heard at the Forum called on the Assembly to hear the cries of the wounded people in Asia, and in particular to pay attention to Myanmar, Philippines, North and South Korea and Sri Lanka. However,

the immediate focus has to be on Kashmir Valley and in the Korean peninsula due to the potential danger of nuclear weapons that threaten the whole creation. A loud cry was heard from the Philippines in the testimony of Rev. Berlin Guererro who was abducted, tortured and imprisoned for his human rights and peace advocacy work.

The trafficking of women and children as sex workers in the tourism industry is another serious concern. The People's Forum pointed out that the damages caused by tourism to the people of Asia are enormous compared to the little benefit that is highly spoken about. These stories of the Jesus people in different contexts shed light on the unabated violation of human rights and violence against women and children. The call to prophesy, reconcile and heal must be heeded from these crucified people before they bleed to death.

The People's Forum also focussed on the role played by the ecumenical movement in Asia. The conversations emphasised the need for the ecumenical movement itself to be liberated from the clutches of the dominant culture of greed. In this instance the Forum became a prophetic voice calling CCA to go back to its roots and to fulfil its calling of being the voice of the voiceless. The Forum participants stated:

"The prophetic role demands us to have a message that challenges the system that is based on greed, violence, and competition... to promote the message of justice, hope and love and the biblical notion of the fullness of life for all in the Oikoumene."

"I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly" (NRSV, John10:10) needs to be lived out by the Jesus people in the assurance of God's generosity over and against the scarcity created by greed. In order to work towards the abundant life, the Jesus people must turn the call to prophesy, reconcile and heal into action.

Prince Devanandan

Praying for peace in Thailand

It is inequality and poverty in Thai society that fuelled the uprising of the poor people. The poor have no other choice and are powerless to negotiate with those in power who are rich. Politicians used development projects to promote patronage politics. People felt that Thaksin, the leader of the Thai Rak Thai Party, has rescued them from poverty for giving them projects. Indebted to him, they are willing to die for him as well.

The Thai Constitution (B.E. 2540) created many independent bodies to balance the power of

The cause of the conflict in Thailand is a long-period of accumulated political problem under the Thai democracy system. Actually, every Thai has an equal right to do many things and also to vote for their own choice according to the Constitution. But, what is unequally granted to all of the Thais is the opportunity especially to receive facts and all-round information.

In a political viewpoint, there might be competition, conflicts, and abhorrences which happened between politicians and the benefited group. But the real problem lies in the politicians' use of the mass media

Thai Buddhist monks at Victory Mournment Park in Bangkok chanting prayers for peace, May 16, 2010. (AP Photo, David Longstreath)



politicians and to solve corruption. Members of the the Yellow Shirts who have learned of Thaksin's alleged corruption mounted the protest actions. People who love Thaksin called themselves the Red Shirts. Those concerned with democracy, on the other hand, did not agree with the coup. Those who have socialist sentiments want to demolish the Monarchy. This is where the conflict began.

The Thai people need to press for reforms in the political structures to respond to and solve inequality problems in Thai society. People should be allowed to participate in all levels of decision-making.

In any conflict, human wisdom is not enough to solve problems. We need spiritual and moral guidance. All believers and faith communities should work and pray together for a just peace in our society.

Rev. Sanan Wutti
Church of Christ in Thailand
Aids Ministry (CAM)

to communicate only the news favorable to them and those which are hostile to their enemies. So the people were all the more confused and they hated their fellow brothers/sisters just because of their political differences.

Thai people should open their minds and accept individual political differences, no matter how diverse those were. Thai people should stop focusing on finding faults and instead try to understand together the real cause of the problem, and collectively find solutions to the problems we face as a nation. Thai people should consider the facts on the basis of morality not on benefits and personal relationships. And, finally, Thai people should also stop being selfish, and start thinking of the nation's welfare.

What has happened here in Thailand is a situation that awakened Thai Christians to be more concerned and to earnestly pray for our beloved country. Thai Christians should be leaders of reconciliation by using the love of Jesus Christ as a model to love others as one's self and to forgive.

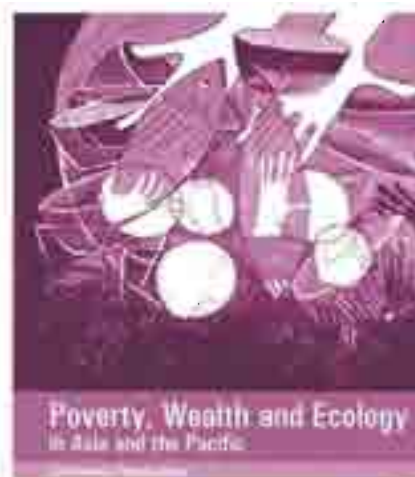
Mr. Warit Anuchirscheewer
CCA Program Area Committee member
Ecumenical Formation, Gender Justice
and Youth Empowerment

Book Promotion

Poverty, Wealth and Ecology

Poverty, Wealth and Ecology in Asia and the Pacific: Ecumenical Perspectives is a product of The AGAPE Consultation and Study Process on Poverty, Wealth and Ecology in Asia and the Pacific held on November 2 - 6, 2009, in Chiang Mai, Thailand. It was organised by the World Council of Churches (WCC) in partnership with the Christian Conference of Asia (CCA), the Pacific Conference of Churches (PCC), and the Church of Christ in Thailand.

The book contains documents - the Chiang Mai Declaration and statements from the women, youth and Indigenous Peoples' hearings, and a commissioned study entitled "Establishing the Links Between Wealth Creation, Poverty and Ecological Devastation: the Asian Experience". These important documents encapsulating recommendations for church advocacy and action, form the basis for the follow up work by churches in the area of advancing socio-economic and ecological justice in Asia and the Pacific.



Jointly published by WCC, CCA and PCC, the book is available for 3USD (excluding postage), by emailing cca@cca.org.hk

Support the Anti POSCO Struggle

The Anti POSCO campaign bravely resists attempts to displace over 30,000 people in Jagatsinghpur District of Orissa by POSCO, a South Korean company that wants to set up a steel company and a port in Jagatsinghpur.

The US12 Billion-dollar project aggressively promoted by the Indian government threatens the livelihood of thousands of agriculturists, workers and small businesses in the area besides devastating the local environment and ecology.

In the course of their peaceful and democratic non-violent struggle to prevent their lands from being forcibly acquired by POSCO, the members of POSCO Pratirodh Sangram Samity (PPSS) have been brutally attacked by paid goons of the company and subjected to grueling economic blockades by the local administration.

In May 2010 the local police killed 14 tribals in Kalinga Nagar who were protesting and branded them as terrorists. Villagers are labeled as terrorist

because they assert their rights to livelihood and land. A hundred women campaigning for justice was also beaten and injured by the police.

The Church of North India (CNI), one of the member churches of CCA is actively engaged in empowering grassroots people and congregations in championing their rights through its Synodical Board of Social Service (SBSS).

Dr Sailendra Awale, Chief Coordinator of the CNI-SBSS wrote to CCA:

"We require support and solidarity of Churches in Korea. Can CCA help us strengthen our networking with Korean Churches to create awareness among Korean communities churches regarding Posco's anti poor activities. If we work in solidarity together we can build prophetic communities of peace."

To lend solidarity and support to the Anti-Posco movement, you may email cnisbss@cnisbss.org

Costly discipleship

One of the important aspects of the 13th CCA General Assembly was the Niles Memorial Lectures. What was unique this time was that the first lecture was given by Dr. Daniel Preman Niles, the younger son of the late Dr. D.T. Niles. In this brief article I lift some ideas which I hope will lead you to reflect and also create a desire in you to read the entire article later when it is published in another CCA publication.

Dr Niles said in his lecture: "My father was no mere evangelist who was preoccupied with how one beggar could tell another where to find food! He was also a prophet who provided a basis for understanding the prophetic ministry of the church in Asia as an inseparable part of its mission."

To explain its implications Dr. Niles went on to say that "...prophetic ministry as an inalienable part of Christian mission may be summarized thus. On the one hand, if the prophetic ministry of the church in Asia is to be credible it needs to demonstrate its identity with Asian peoples and its involvement in Asian realities. On the other, this identity has to be a critical identity. The church in Asia should not slavishly conform to Asian political, religious or economic pressures. The problem of how these two facets are to be related and expressed is at the heart of prophetic ministry."

He explained further the role of the Church in any given context to conformity and contestation. However, he also warned the dangers it faces. He said that "When conformity loses the critical dimension implicit in contestation it becomes conformism. When contestation is bereft of a contextual base, it becomes an alien voice that carries little or no conviction. Conformity and contestation need to relate to each other in creative tension."

Having laid this foundation for his paper he then goes to link conformity and contestation to the ministry of Jesus and the ecumenical movement. To express his mission to his band of disciples, Jesus chose a political concept expressed in Greek as *Basileia tou Theou*, which brings out the dimension of contestation. This Greek phrase is best translated as 'the Empire of God' rather than 'the Kingdom of God'. Those who heard Jesus, both friend and foe alike, would have heard it as a direct challenge to the Empire of Caesar.

Dr Niles added that because of the usage of the term empire of God Jesus would also have been viewed as one who is trying to destabilize the Peace of Rome (*Pax Romana*) through which Rome militarily controlled a vast territory. Rome would have viewed his prophetic action in confronting the Empire of Rome with the Empire of God as sedition. He stated firmly that "Rome executed him."

He concluded this section by saying, "Costly discipleship not only involves risk taking and facing rejection. Many a time it also involves loneliness. That is why, as D.T.

Niles envisaged, one of the many tasks of the ecumenical movement is to provide a forum for those engaged in prophetic ministry."

Dr. Niles also took pains to show the temptation for the church and the ecumenical movement to become institutions rather than movements. He quoted his father by saying, "Niles worried that Asian churches could easily settle down to being mere institutions and cease to be



movements that would be concerned with the mission of the church and the tasks of the future in a post-colonial, post-missionary situation. That is why the ecumenical movement needed to be a forum for those who were willing to undertake the tasks of the future and be at the frontiers of the Christian enterprise. In our language, the ecumenical movement should be a forum to support those engaged in the prophetic ministry of the church. Implied in what he said was also the need for the ecumenical movement to hold together church as institution and church as movement."

He also quoted Dr. M.M. Thomas which is worth reflecting on: "The ecumenical movement was originally a movement of friends. Then it became a movement of movements. Finally it has become a movement of the churches. And the last is now turning around to kill off the first two."

Dr. Niles concluded his presentation by stating the temptation that the churches in Asia are facing: "In Asia, churches are communities that have been scattered among the nations. In this situation we face one of two temptations. One is to lose our identity and conform to the mores and demands of the world in which we live. The other is to bemoan our minority situation and in self-pity do nothing. In both cases, we would lose the spiritual energy needed for prophetic ministry."

Rienzie Perera

Doing justice for the poor

Dr. Ruth Manorama, a Dalit woman leader from Bangalore, who serves concurrently as President of the National Alliance of Women, National Convenor of the National Federation of Dalit Women, and General Secretary of Women's Voice, delivered the D.T. Niles Lecture II at the 13th CCA General Assembly.

Dr. Manorama was honored with the Right Livelihood Award in 2006 (claimed to be the alternate Nobel Prize) in recognition of her tireless campaign and dedication to the rights of the Dalit people.

Ruth, as she is known to her friends continues to draw strength from ecumenical leaders who have instilled in her a strong commitment to justice for the poor and marginalized. She said, "The ecumenical movement had great influence on me as an Indian, a woman, a Dalit and a Christian and similarly on my friends in Asia. Our exposures to ecumenical thinking, liberation theology and progressive ideologies of the 1980s challenged us to live with the poor, oppressed and marginalized and participate in the ongoing local struggles of our people."

She continues, "just after "Emergency" rule in my country (India - 1970's) the ecumenical movement brought together in a conference, persons who were arrested and detained in prisons, persecuted and tortured for their belief in democracy - and those were for pro-democracy - i.e. political leaders, students, activists from social movements, teachers, theologians, pastors and other professionals. The Rev. Harry Daniel, former Associate General Secretary of CCA was present at that conference. In fact I had my first introduction to CCA through him. I had participated in deliberations representing the student movement and gained confidence and courage to involve myself and not succumb to the "status quo" within the church and society and continued to do, what I was doing."

Reconciliation and healing is not a "welfarist mode of work" of the churches, but it is a political engagement with people, ideologies, politics and identities."

It is not only building of hospitals and rendering medical care but it goes beyond the clinical component of healing. Symbolically we lit lamps and candles to represent peace. People who engage in reconciliation and healing should have deeper analysis and the right perspective to deal with reconciliation. Deeper analysis is needed to understand the nature, degree and dimensions of conflicts and brokenness. Reconciliation and peace building cannot take place in an

ad-hoc manner. We need skills and techniques, values and qualities of a peace builder. Here I am not talking about paid peace negotiators or hired consultants. We need peace advocates in the churches who commit their lives to addressing the root causes of conflicts, prepared to accompany the victims in the conflict and to address powers and principalities that perpetuate violence in all its manifestations."



On the Dalit struggles and untouchability, Manorama draws strength from the words of Bishop V. Davashayam, the Church of South India Bishop of Chennai. In his paper "Pollution, Poverty and to the Powerlessness", he focuses on the depth of the pollution issue that now affects Dalits and other caste people. He reminds us that God is the hope of His people and aligns Himself with them in their struggle. The exodus experience for Dalits is coming out of untouchability, out of the oppression in Hinduism into the liberating experience of Jesus Christ. The Jesus of India is in the midst of the liberation struggle of Dalits and the God whom Christ reveals and of whom the prophets spoke because he is a servant of a Dalit God.

You are invited to read the full presentation of Dr. Ruth Manorama of the DT Niles Lectures in another publication of the CCA Assembly proceedings.

Charlie Ocampo

A PRAYER FOR THE JOURNEY

Eternal God, Creator, Redeemer and Sanctifier:

You created the world, all things belong to you,
You created people in your own image,
You willed all to be equal in your sight.
In Christ you have gifted the world with deliverance
that brings liberty, peace and justice for all creation.

We have sinned and have failed miserably!
We have shared in the world's sin—
by our love of ease and pleasure,
by our pride of race, class and possession,
by our hard bargaining and ruthless competition,

To be reconcilers -
to be guardians of the fragile beauty of creation,
to be at peace among ourselves,
to be in harmony with people
of all races and religions,
to be gracious in our temper and
generous in our judgment,
to be sensitive to the feelings of others and
bearers of costly love.

To be healers -
to care for the earth wounded by our neglect,
to attend to the needs of the poor.



by our failure to love and care for our neighbor,
by neglecting, ravaging and degrading your
creation,
and by our lust for power and hardness of heart.

Have mercy on us.
Forgive us, by your grace transform us
and grant us strength of will to walk in your ways.
Help us to be still, to listen to your call.
Empower us with the Holy Spirit:

To be prophets—
to speak against all forms of injustice
and to stand boldly for the truth,
to hear the cry of communities affected
by climate change,
to uplift the poor and the needy,
to be in solidarity with the wounded
and the oppressed,
to turn pain into joy, hurt into love and fear into
hope.

and the exploited,
to minister to the sick, the captives
and all who are grieved,
to stand with the forsaken and with
those whose spirits have been crushed,
to enable all who suffer indignity
to gain fullness of life.

O God, fill us anew with humility,
strength and serenity,
Give us joy and peace believing.
Teach us the way of Christ, the Servant Lord.
Raise our hearts to you:
Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
To you alone be glory forever! Amen.

*This prayer was an affirmation of faith read at the
closing worship of the 13th CCA General Assembly in
Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, on 14 - 21 April 2010.*