

cca news



**Make Us Reconcilers,
O God!**

Make us reconcilers, O God!



Water is very substantial in nourishing the life of all creation. Without water life dies. However, we also experience the devastating power of water such as the recent floods that still inundates the lives of people in Thailand and in many other parts of Asia.

Rev. Reuben Qamar, Deputy Executive Secretary of the Presbyterian Church of Pakistan (PCP) shared this story:

"It was really painful to see people with their kids living in tents when the cruel winter is starting in mid-December. The flood devastation was much more than the expected and three months after the water is still here. According to the locals they have not seen such heavy rain and devastation in their whole lives. The water is still standing in the fields and they are unable to cultivate crops."

We hear stories of people affected by calamities - their stories of anger, impatience, and confrontation with authorities. They feel that their cries and agony are not heard and addressed properly. Beyond these distressing accounts we also hear stories of hope from among the traumatized. Victims help each other, support and comfort each other, share whatever limited resources and food for their common survival.

In Thailand, people collect donations to support flood victims. Various community groups who may have social and political differences and disputes work hard together to help victims. When the sense of solidarity grows in the hearts of people and touches the lives of many, people are able to go

beyond their self-centeredness and greediness that destroy life for all.

What I have said is more than the issue of water management, as it involves the changing of hearts to care for others. Stories of hope are signs that people are able to reconcile with their own selves, their neighbors and the rest of creation. We are thus encouraged to hear and witness the life transforming experiences which, we believe are made possible by the power of the Holy Spirit.

**For it is the God who said, 'Let light shine out of darkness', who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.
(2 Cor. 4:6)**

We are thankful to God who is always in solidarity with the whole creation in the struggle to claim fullness of life for all, and to Jesus Christ who offers his life to the world as the Water of Life.

In whatever situation we face, may our prayer be:

"Make us reconcilers, O God. Guide our advent meditations and lead us to a joyful Christmas celebration."

May our Christmas be merry and the year 2012 be blessed, indeed!

Henriette Hutabarat-Lebang

Official publication of the
Christian Conference of Asia

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:
Henriette Hutabarat Lebang

Editorial Committee:
Liza Lamis
Carlos Ocampo
Sung Kook Park



Cover Photo: CCA General Assembly
in 2010, by Vuluk Lai Chao-Tsai,
Taiwan.

Disclaimer:

Opinions expressed in the articles
of this publication do not necessarily
reflect the policies or positions of CCA.

In this issue

Editorial 2

Theological Reflections

Make us reconcilers, O God! 4
Proclaiming the gospel of reconciliation 6

In focus

Thailand's worst floods 10
Training ecumenical leaders 12



Getting to zero? 16
No more bases in Okinawa 20
Cry of the Earth and the poor are one 22



Humanitarian aid in North Korea 24
Training HR advocates 26

Brief News

27

Reflections

Ecumenism and evangelicalism 28
Creating a culture of peace 30

In special focus

2011 Asia Sunday and the CCA Emergency Fund 31

Make us reconcilers, O God!

“And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation.” (2 Cor. 5:19)

“East is East and West is West and never the twain shall meet”, said Rudyard Kipling. The nations of the world, their ethnicities, their views and ways of life are such that one could consider them to be incompatible. The poetic statement of Kipling regrettably finds expression in many communal tendencies in our pluralistic world today where one religious or ethnic community is against another. It is in such contexts that we are called to be reconcilers.

Jesus made the Jews to overcome their prejudice and dislike of Samaritans by pointing out, in his parable on love for the neighbour, that the good neighbour was indeed a Samaritan. “Go and do likewise”, he said to the Jews (Lk.10:37). Similarly, Jesus invited the Samaritan woman, who considered Mount Gerizim to be the holy mountain of God, while the Jews regarded Mount Zion to be the holy mountain of God, to transcend her religious fundamentalism (and his disciples to transcend their Jewish fundamentalism) when he said, “God is spirit and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.” (Jn. 4:24).

There are situations where communalism is based not merely on ethnic, cultural differences, but more seriously on systems of injustice, such as the caste system. Religion is also misused to justify such unjust systems. In such cases, reconciliation is not simply an emotional matter of shedding tears, asking for forgiveness and being forgiven, and the victimiser and the victim embracing each other. In such cases, reconciliation calls for a revolution, putting an end to the system of injustice.

The unjust system of caste, apartheid, patriarchy, etc., has to be done away with. Jesus was not talking of any simple emotional reconciliation; he was advocating a revolution, symbolized by his slogan, “The Reign of God!” As we are all aware, Jesus’ Nazareth Manifesto, as recorded in Lk. 4:18-19, emphasizes commitment to the reign of God, “the year of the Lord’s favour”. This year of the Lord’s favour is expressive of the Jubilee year, described in Lev. 25, which has three important features: 1) Repentance (not merely of the individual, but of the whole community); 2) Rest and recreation of all the earth; and 3) Reform (both economic - “getting back one’s property and therefore identity”, and social - “freedom from slavery”).

Jesus calls us to be reconcilers in this deeper sense. The National Council of Churches in India (NCCI) with its commitment to justice for dalits calls upon even Christians and Churches to purge the caste system from within their lives and society: “You cannot serve Christ and Caste!”

In our world of globalization, reconciliation has taken a new meaning. People are told to be reconciled to the fact that ‘There Is No Alternative’ (TINA) and therefore they have to accept the globalization system or be left out. One expression of globalization is the gradual disappearance of cultural diversity. George Ritzer calls this phenomenon, McDonaldization, the process by which the principles of the fast-food restaurant are coming to dominate more and more sectors of

Dear God,
we pray for
communities
caught up in
violence in
Kandhamal,
India, whose
houses and
worship
places were
razed to the
ground. May
they find
hope for the
future as
they continue
trusting in
your love and
mercy.

the world. Since 1955 McDonald's has grown to 31,967 outlets worldwide. The central concepts employed in the fast-food industry have spread to all types of restaurants. Everything from pizza to lobster, from ice cream to bread, from alcohol to fried chicken is dominated by the Chain mentality. We no longer have to go to the chains. They have come to us. They are in the suburbs, the central cities, the malls, our schools and military bases ... indeed everywhere. It's not only the food industry that represents this process of McDonaldization. Toy stores (Toys R Us), Bookstores (B. Dalton's), Newspapers (USA Today), child care (Kinder Care), learning (Sylvan Learning

mutually influencing one another and working together for the common good pooling their distinctive resources. Ecumenism is one Christian expression of reconciliation. As Jesus puts it, "And many will come from east and west and sit at table with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven" (Matt.8:11). Indeed East and West shall meet!

Roger Gaikwad

The Rev. Dr. Roger Gaikwad is from the Presbyterian Church in India, and is currently the General Secretary of NCC India.



Centres) and a host of others have followed.

The Christian alternative to homogenization is ecumenism. It is a relationship of togetherness in which individuals and groups retain their identity but are at the same time open to the unique identities of others, thereby

Reconciliation without justice is shortlived. Caste Hindus and perpetrators of globalization, among others, need to repent. Picture shows Korean and German youth washing the feet of Musahar, a Hindu scheduled caste in Uttar Pradesh and Bihar in India, in 2008 as an act of reconciliation. (<http://www.pvchr.net/2011/06/reconciliation-with-dalit-fired-up.html>)

An ecumenical imperative

Proclaiming the gospel of reconciliation

“Make us reconcilers, O God!” is both a prayer and a call for the Christian Conference of Asia (CCA) towards fullness of life in Christ. It is an important component of the 13th CCA General Assembly theme - Called to Prophecy, Reconcile and Heal - for the five year period starting in April 2010 until the next Assembly.

Reconciliation is defined in the ecumenical movement as the “renewal of the relationship with the Triune God accomplished for us in Jesus Christ” (World Council of Churches). It reflects the common witness of the churches. On the part of CCA, actions to accompany churches in the reconciliation processes whether in Japan, Korean Peninsula, Philippines, Indonesia, East Timor, Cambodia or India have been priority concerns.

We will reflect on the model of reconciliation process as it is experienced by Christian churches in the Philippines through the Philippine Ecumenical Peace Platform (PEPP).

PEPP is the largest Christian network calling for peace talks that will lead to a just and lasting peace by addressing the roots of the armed conflict. The National Council of Churches in the Philippines (NCCP) is an active member of the four year old PEPP, which brings together leaders from the Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines (CBCP), the Philippine Council of Evangelical Churches (PCEC), Ecumenical Bishops' Forum (EBF), NCCP and the Association of Major Religious Superiors in the Philippines (AMRSP).

The PEPP was inspired partly by the Norwegian Ecumenical Peace Platform (NEPP) in Norway. The Royal Norwegian Government has played a facilitative role in the peace process. In 2002, the RNG called on the NEPP to establish contacts with a broad ecumenical sector in the Philippines that can act as a support group to ensure the resumption of the peace talks. Four years later, the NEPP sent Fr. Michel Beckers to the Philippines to explore this possibility. His subsequent visits led to the creation of a focal group which would pave the way for the first conference of church leaders from the major Christian organizations in the

Philippines. This meeting took place on November 5-7, 2007, in Tagaytay. Subsequently named as the Philippine Ecumenical Peace Platform, it has for its primary objective the call for the Government of the Philippines and the National Democratic Front of the Philippines to go back to the negotiating table. In pursuit of that objective it conducted forums in various regions in an attempt to create a groundswell of support for the call for peace talks.

The road to reconciliation in the Philippines, through the peace process has not been a concrete pavement all along. Yet, since it started following the People Power in 1986, it has achieved significant agreements. The most significant among them is The Hague Declaration signed in September 1, 1992, expressing the two parties' commitment to resolve the armed conflict in the Philippines.

The agreement set forth four substantive agenda for the peace talks: (respect to) human rights and international humanitarian law; socio-economic reforms; political and constitutional reforms; and, the disposition of forces.

Another important agreement was the Joint Agreement on Security and Immunity Guarantees (JASIG), signed in February 24, 1995, which ensures the safety of all persons involved in the peace process. Such guarantee includes safe conduct passes and protection from arrests or detention.

The first agenda now known as the Comprehensive Agreement on Respect for Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law (CARHIHL) was signed by both parties in March 16, 1998. Along with the signing was the creation of a Joint Monitoring Committee. This Committee receives complaints of violations, related information and initiates recommendations for the implementation of the CARHIHL).

PEPP, in its primary declaration “Audacity to Hope” seeks to build bridges of reconciliation to encourage the conflicting parties to resume the peace talks and deal with the substantial issues agreed upon. Behind this move to seek peace are the “grinding poverty and pervading suffering of the Filipino

people as glaring realities that are impossible to ignore. The tragic loss of human life resulting from unresolved conflicts is an indictment on those who govern. These hinder the attainment of genuine democracy. On one hand they are recipes to civil unrest. On the other, they are solid motivations if not imperatives for the resumption of the peace talks.”

The PEPP's initial moves included a Church Solidarity Mission participated by members of the Core Group of PEPP which met with the government panel in the Office of the Presidential Assistant on the Peace Process (OPAPP) on August 29, 2008. A delegation of PEPP was sent to meet with NDFP members of the panel in Utrecht, Holland on September 2, 2008, before the start of the partnership mission with the NEPP and the RNG on September 3-8, 2008.

From October 2007 to October 2011, PEPP conducted thirty (30) regional workshops in Luzon, Visayas, and Mindanao. In these workshops, representatives from both panels were invited to update the church representatives on the peace process. They became important venues for the continuing education of Church leaders on the history, substantive agenda and major issues of the peace talks. The participants have appreciated a rare opportunity of conversing with representatives of both panels in one occasion and at the same time the panel representatives are updated on the people's issues. More importantly, it was a way for the church people in the regions to articulate to both panels the longing for justice and peace.

Recently, PEPP has developed a module on Peace that will be utilized for peace education in the grassroots level. It is hoped that this will redound to a vibrant and dynamic peace constituency.

Now on its fifth year of existence, PEPP is recognized as one of the leading voices in the country for the pursuit of peace based on justice. PEPP's vision is “the establishment of a just and enduring peace in the Philippines. It is a faith-based national ecumenical peace movement in the Philippines.

PEPP's mandate and mission are:

- A) To be a Prophetic Voice for a just and enduring Peace;
 - To articulate the bases for peace from our Faith Traditions;
 - To announce the Gospel values of Truth, Justice, Love and Freedom, Forgiveness and Reconciliation;
 - To expose and denounce the causes of un-peace.

B. To work for continuing peace negotiations and resumption of formal peace talks between the GRP and the NDFP towards a final peace agreement;

- To sustain engagements with the principals (GPH, et al, NDFP) and the 3rd party (RNG)
- To build international and national pressure for the resumption of the talks
- To learn from the past and present peace negotiations and agreements (national and international)

C) To be a platform of the people's articulation of their needs, hopes and aspirations within the context of the peace talks;

- To create venues/opportunities for the articulation and amplification of people's peace agenda in the peace negotiations

D) To encourage and support collaborative actions to address local causes of social conflict.

- To build a peace constituency within and among churches, and faith communities. (Peace organizing as part of peace advocacy)
- To provide venues for sharing examples of local Peacebuilding activities e.g. Spaces for Peace, Environmental Protection, Developmental Projects, etc.

Milestones

- Local PEPP networks established (organizations affiliate with PEPP), issue prophetic statements
- Establishment of a national coordinating body (local PEPP networks represented)

An urban poor community in Navotas, Metro Manila, Philippines. (Photo: Norma Dollaga)



Theological Reflections

- Identified national and international partners for PEPP and partnership established (MOA)
- People's agenda for peace consolidated by PEPP is substantially incorporated into the draft agreement.
- Peace process integrated into organizations/networks/institutions' advocacies
- Production and publication of PEPP peace modules.



- Conduct regular national assemblies
- Documentation and publication of our good practices
- Solidarity activities promoted in Norway (and in other identified partner-countries)

Guiding principles in Engaging the Peace Process

- Affirming good faith and upholding mutual respect and dignity between and among parties involved.
- Viewing the peace process as an avenue for dialog and resolving root causes of conflict to attain the common good.
- Building on the positive elements of the bilateral agreements and upholding the principles of subsidiarity, democracy and stewardship.
- Creating new reality - basic reforms in the medium and long terms, while achieving gains immediately beneficial to the people.
- Respecting the process while being creative, compassionate and forward looking.
- Maintaining integrity, transparency, inclusivity and balance at all times.

- Committing to the long and arduous journey towards the realization of the fullness of life.

On the occasion of the International Day of Peace, PEPP issued this press statement on September 16, 2010:

"To take on the second agenda i.e. the Comprehensive Agreement on Social and Economic Reforms, is to move closer to the core issue surrounding the current conflict in the Philippines - social and economic injustice. As we have so often stated in the past, the gap between those who have economic power and the majority who are poor is a recipe for social unrest. It is a malady that has eaten into the patience and resilience of the ordinary people fostering militant resistance and social aggression. It continues to divide the people and stymies the climb for prosperity for all. It lays to waste any or all effort for dynamic growth. Social and economic policies for development remained insensitive to the voice and genuine participation of all, especially those sectors directly affected by programs and projects called for by such policies. Just and lasting peace merits especially the resolution of economic policies that widen the gap between people rather than seek the equitable distribution of the country's wealth and the development of its natural resources primarily for the good of all its citizens. Of utmost importance are age-old issues of land reform, national industrialization and protection of national patrimony. Thus, we feel part of the compelling need to resume the peace talks is for both parties to come to terms with the issue of social and economic injustice in the Philippines. To them shall this nation be grateful if the initial steps are taken."

Solidarity with the People and Their Issues

The National Council of Churches in the Philippines, through its General Secretary summed up why church people must engage in the call for peace and justice:

"Calling for the resumption of the formal peace talks is never irrelevant. It is part of the church's role in reconciling communities in conflict and to be in solidarity with the people and their issues. Aside from peace-making and reconciliation as our Christian vocation and being peacemakers and reconcilers as our baptismal promise, the second substantive agenda that the panels must deal with is economic reforms. This is crucial in that economic justice is one of the roots of conflict in our country. Genuine agrarian reform, the extraction and just sharing of our resources and our need to industrialize the promotion and protection of local

industries among others fall within the agenda. For many years an import-dependent, export-oriented and foreign investment-driven economy has not succeeded. Certainly our generation owes a more hospitable country to the next.

Our biblical faith in the promise of abundant life for all as well as the human suffering we see around us are compelling reasons to reflect continually on and live out the meaning of God's mighty act of sending Jesus Christ to be with us. Barriers towards the full realization of this promise of abundant life, created by principalities and powers have no place in Christian communities. NCCP understands its ministry of presence as emanating from the incarnation and the resurrection."

Resume the Formal Talks Now

"They dress the wound of my people as though it were not serious. 'Peace, peace', they say, when there is no peace." (Jeremiah 6:14)

On February 22, 2011, there was hope that the peace talks would resume. NCCP top leaders issued a letter expressing appreciation for the decision to uphold all previous agreements by the GPH and the NDFP so painstakingly crafted in the past. But recent news revealed that there is an impasse on the peace process.

PEPP called on both panels to stay on course and resume the formal talks. They issued a call to transcend the present impasse and continue to bridge the peace. Signed by the two Co Convenors of PEPP, Archbishop Antonio Ledesma and Ms. Sharon Joy Ruiz-Duremdes, this statement was issued on October 20, 2011:

"If the JASIG is the hindrance, then the two sides must return to the negotiating table and try to resolve the impasse created by the differing perspectives on JASIG. We urge the two sides to review and discuss the JASIG further, with the guiding dictum that the essence of that agreement is that it lays down the principles and modalities for safety and immunity guarantees for the personnel, consultants and other people involved in the formal peace negotiations."

"Is there a balm in Gilead?" (Jeremiah 8:22)

Reconciliation of both parties in conflict is not indeed an easy task but we see that in Christ, there is a way to reconcile. Church leaders need to stay the course in calling for parties to go back to the negotiating table. On November 3, 2011, PEPP Core Group also decided to call on the resumption of peace talks between the GPH and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF). There are two sides in bridge building and both sides must commit to create spaces for meaningful dialogue that could eventually lead into the last phase of the peace process, cessation of hostility and disposition of forces.

In one of the meetings between the PEPP Core Group and the Chairperson of the Philippine Government Panel, the Chairperson of the PG Panel recognized the role of the PEPP in the peace process and urged the PEPP to continue "pushing us" pricking our conscience for the peace process. That is exactly what PEPP will do.

*Rex R.B. Reyes
Erlinda Senturias*

The Rev. Rex R.B. Reyes is a member of the CCA Presidium (2010-2015) and Dr. Erlinda Senturias is CCA HIV and AIDs Consultant (2009-2011). Both are members of the PEPP Core Group.



The Oslo Mission in 2008.

Thailand's worst floods



A house under water. (Photo: Prawate Khid-arn)

Thailand faced the worst flood in the last 50 years similar to the one that inundated Bangkok in 1942, where most areas were submerged in water and people moved around in boats.

The 2011 flood is described as the worst in terms of the volume of water and people affected. One-third of 77 provinces was inundated, over 10 million residents have been advised to move their belongings to higher ground and to evacuate to temporary shelters. Seven major industrial estates have been inundated that cost Bht400,000 million Baht economic loss. The great loss and damages gave rise to new innovations and to closer community and family unity and cooperation.

The Church of Christ in Thailand (CCT), guided by its divine responsibility made clear its role in restoring God's creation. Since the flood arrived in the northern part of Thailand in October 2011, CCT immediately extended humanitarian assistance to the flood victims. It also responded to the nationwide campaign called "Thai helps Thai, Thais never forget each other".

The CCT staff in Chiang Mai in coordination with local churches, educational institutions, and local governmental offices opened a temporary kitchen at Huey Kaew Church. They cooked and distributed food, drinking water, rice and dry food to the victims in Chiang Mai. CCT's member churches sincerely donated food stuff such as rice, instant noodles, drinking water, canned goods and fresh vegetables, including toiletries.

A successful charity concert dubbed "Stage Music" held on October 21, 2011, contributed its proceeds to the flood relief program of CCT. At the Sri Thammarat Suksa School, a group of 11 secondary students called the "B-Boy Dancing Team", volunteered to raise funds. The money was turned over to augment CCT's flood relief program funds.

For a long-term rehabilitation program the CCT-Relief Committee has been set up and tasked to prepare an integrated rehabilitation proposal. This program will become one of the center piece activities of CCT in 2012.

Many churches, ecumenical organizations and friends in Asia and around the world expressed solidarity and extended helping hands to CCT and the Thai people. Ecumenical solidarity messages and financial support sent to CCT reflect how great our God is and how the global ecumenical communities care for each other.

Rev. Dr. Boonratana Buayen, Moderator CCT, in his appeal for prayers and solidarity said:

"This is a crisis situation for our church and our country, spiritually,

economically, socially and in every other area of life. I am therefore writing to ask for your continuing prayer as well as any practical support you feel able to give us and please accept our deep gratitude for many of you who have already written to ask us how you can help.”

Rev. Dr. Henriette Hutabarat Lebang, CCA General Secretary said,

“The CCA member churches and councils are in solidarity with you (CCT) in braving the floods that has already extensively damaged the country. In our supplications we affirm and plead for God’s steadfast love and generosity in responding to the urgent needs of people affected by the floods.”

Thailand’s worst flood ever indirectly reflects how human beings perceive and understand nature. Natural calamity is basically about human greed. Calamities remind us that there is a limit for everything. We are not living in a boundless warehouse of resources but with creation with finite boundaries.

Nature and human beings are interconnected. Humans are only a part of God’s creation. Therefore we need to work with nature rather than against it. The overuse of natural resources such as water, forest, fossil fuels as well as nuclear energy is destructive to creation. We should move toward the use of renewable sources and energy that God has abundantly given us as we live alongside with creation.

“The world and all that is in it belong to the Lord; the earth and all who live on it are his” (Psalm 24:1).

God is committed 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).

A sustainable planet requires that we listen more carefully to nature’s groans and people’s cries so that we can understand why nature is cruel to us. Then we can change what we must, accommodate what we must, and be a good neighbor in the global community.

Clearly environment and ecological problems such as the flood we are facing is are not merely natural, economic and political crises. They are also spiritual, moral and ethical crises. Global salvation is everyone’s concern. Global sustainable development is not only a struggle from below and of the ‘have-nots’. It is also the commitment of ‘the rich’, the ‘haves’ and governments to be accountable to the poor and the vulnerable.

Protection of our natural environment is an urgent issue. God created the Earth, and we believe that God continues to sustain it.

*Prawate Khid-arn
Dr. Prawate Khid-arn is former CCA
General Secretary and now serves as
CCT’s Manager of the Office of Policy
Management.*



*Packing food stuff for flood victims.
(Photo: Prawate Khid-arn)*

Training ecumenical leaders

This year CCA-FMU organized a regional ecumenical course and a national ecumenical course in cooperation with a CCA member.

The Asian Ecumenical Course 2011 was held at Paradornparp International House in Payap University, Chiang Mai, Thailand on 29 August - 10 September. The Basic Ecumenical Course, co-organized with the Communion of Churches in Indonesia was held at the Conference Center of Universitas Kristen Duta Wacana (UKDW), in Kaliurang, Yogyakarta on 2-15 May 2011.

Asian Ecumenical Course 2011

Building on the AEC 2011 theme, "Living Out Our Prophetic Faith for Such a Time as This," the Rev. Prince Devanandan, a Methodist minister from Aotearoa New Zealand and a member of the CCA General Committee, recalled in a Bible study at the start of the AEC how prophets of Yahweh prophesied when

accountability to Yahweh was ignored by the rulers, when the rich and the powerful opted to exploit the poor and the vulnerable, or when the people disregarded the commandments of Yahweh.

"Prophetic ministry in the Hebrew scripture indicates that Yahweh's prophets prophesied not during ordinary times, under normal circumstances, but during violent and abnormal circumstances," Devanandan said.

He quoted American Bible scholar Walter Brueggemann who said, "The task of prophetic ministry is to nurture, nourish, and evoke a consciousness and perception alternate to the consciousness and perception of the dominant cultures around us." He then guided the group to critically look at the dominant cultures driven by greed for wealth and pleasure and causing more exploitation, displacement, and forced migration.

AEC participants singing a song at a local congregation's Sunday service in Chiang Mai



AEC is a two-week live-in ecumenical formation program of CCA which consists of four components: Asian reality, ecumenical history and vision, community building and leadership training.

A total of 20 participants (10 women, 10 men; 12 of them below 30 years old), completed the two-week AEC this year. They came from Bangladesh, Aotearoa New Zealand, Malaysia, Japan, Hong Kong, Indonesia, Korea,

Sri Lanka, Myanmar, Philippines, and Cambodia. They included theology students, young seminary faculty, ecumenical workers and church youth members.

Serving as dean of AEC 2011, the Rev. Dr. Henriette Hutabarat Lebang, CCA General Secretary, gave the opening message and warmly welcomed all the participants to the program.

Daily worship with a Bible study was led by different groups of participants. Some of the Bible studies were led by CCA staff. Ms Moumita Biswas, then joint executive secretary for Ecumenical Formation, Gender Justice and Youth Empowerment, led a Bible study on peacemaking. Rev. Dr. Sungkook Park, joint executive secretary for Faith, Mission and Unity, led a Bible study on interfaith relations. Dr. Liza Lamis, consultant for communications, led a feminist Bible study.

Analysis of Asian reality was deepened through the sharing of country realities by the participants, and with additional input by Mr. Charlie Ocampo, joint executive secretary for Justice, International Affairs, Development and Service. Inputs on ecumenical history were given by Dr. Kyaw Than, former general secretary of East Asia Christian Conference (before its name change to CCA in 1973) and on wider ecumenical vision by Dr. Hope S. Antone, then CCA joint executive secretary for Faith, Mission and Unity in charge of AEC program. Participants also shared their own churches' ecumenical journeys.

Inputs and workshops were also done on selected ecumenical challenges. Dr. Parichart Suwanbubha, a lay Buddhist professor at Mahidol University in Bangkok, led two workshops on interfaith relations, conflict transformation & peacebuilding. Dr. Liza Lamis, consultant for communications, led a workshop on gender justice. Dr. Erlinda Senturias, CCA consultant for HIV&AIDS, led the workshop on building HIV competence. A visit to an ecological village gave the participants additional input and exposure to issues of ecological justice.



Leadership training included opportunities for participants to be in teams to lead in devotion and Bible study, moderating sessions, timekeeping, leading in icebreakers, and synthesis of the day's program. The participants also had an opportunity to work on their reflections and action plans and to evaluate the program.

Morning prayer and devotion during the exposure trip to Maehongson, which included a meditative exercise.

Participants' Reflections

Following are some reflections by four of the participants written in response to evaluation questions on the AEC.

"Before attending the AEC, I thought ecumenism is only about Christian unity. But now I know that it is also about Christianity and other religions. I learned about Asian church history in the university but I didn't know about what is happening in Asian countries. Now I know about the Asian situation and I try to pray for the different countries." -Takuya Nagano, Japan

"I learned how difficult it is for churches in Asia to work together for Christ Jesus. It is good to know that some parts of

Asia are uniting not only in serving Christ but also in their faith practice. However, churches in Asia still need to continue inter-denominational dialogue that others may see Christ through their lives as Jesus had prayed in his priestly prayer (John 17:1-21). To meet the needs of the world and to change the world, churches in Asia need to cooperate and dialogue with other religions. God calls upon churches in Asia to encounter the world's realities of suffering and to change those into justice and peace. Only then will creation enjoy the redemption of Christ.”
- Go Van Mung, Myanmar

“We were encouraged to step out of our comfort zones and take opportunities to lead different small groups... [Through these] we learnt indirectly from each other how to lead in different styles. Naturally there was a sense of community between us all as we learnt new things together, travelled together, and spent the past two weeks together.”
- Angela Norton, Aotearoa New Zealand

“I experienced much enjoyable and intentional community building and leadership training. The exposure trips allowed us to really bond as a community, looking after the well-being of each other and even understanding the diverse contexts from which we came. Also, the opportunity to lead and

facilitate the daily program enabled us to lead in singing, praying, Bible study, reflection, dialogue, etc.”
- Paul Lau, Malaysia

This year's AEC was held in Chiang Mai around the time of the CCA Executive Committee meeting thereby giving participants an opportunity to meet with the leaders of CCA. AEC participants led a morning worship which was also participated by the Executive Committee.

Basic Ecumenical Course - Indonesia

In order to reach out to more participants and to encourage member NCCs to hold their own ecumenical formation programs, CCA-FMU also organized the Basic Ecumenical Course with the Communion of Churches in Indonesia (CCI) on the theme, “Called to Prophesy, Reconcile and Heal”.

CCA has more than 30 member churches in Indonesia and many of them have not been able to send participants to CCA programs. Thus, the holding of the BEC was aimed at reaching out to more member churches and also to initiate an ecumenical formation program which was hoped to become a CCI regular program in the future.

Some participants at the opening worship of the Basic Ecumenical Course in Yogyakarta.





Participants visit a church-related organization for the empowerment of people with disability in Yogyakarta.

Although the BEC is a national program, CCA tried to give it an international flavor by inviting participants from the neighboring countries who speak and understand Bahasa Indonesia.

A total of 40 participants from CCA and CCI member churches completed the program. Ten (10) were women and seven were international participants (3 from Malaysia and 4 from Timor Leste). Participants were mostly pastors, some theology students, and leaders of their churches or organizations.

The Rev. Dr. Tabita Kartika Christiani, professor of Christian Education at UKDW, served as BEC dean while Olvi Prihutami, staff of the Koinonia unit of CCI, served as co-facilitator. Dr. Hope S. Antone, CCA-FMU joint executive secretary, was one of the resource persons. Other resource persons came from CCI, UKDW and other church and ecumenical organizations in Indonesia.

Participants were generally satisfied with this program, saying it helped to broaden their understanding of ecumenism. Although some participants were still struggling with the new concept of wider ecumenism, they said that the more important thing was to start acting ecumenically rather than thinking about only.

Most of their action plans had to do with Christian education for a more ecumenical point of view starting at the childhood level, gender equality and the role of women in church and society, ecumenical actions with other churches, ecumenical actions with people of other faiths for a certain issue including religious plurality, ecology and natural disaster.

Participants from Timor Leste expressed that this was one CCA program where they fully understood everything and could take back something with them. It was also good for them to come as a team of 4 as they would be able to do more when they returned to their synod and congregations.

Participants from Malaysia said that even though they struggled so much with the language (bahasa Malayu being different from Bahasa Indonesia), it was a humbling experience for them to listen more rather than talk more. They felt that while it was more logical for Malaysians to join the Indonesian BEC (the two countries sharing similar realities), they hoped for a time when Malaysia would have its own BEC so that more local pastors and seminary students would be exposed to ecumenism and its wider vision.

Hope S. Antone

Zero Discrimination, Zero New HIV Infection, Zero AIDS-Related Deaths

Getting to Zero?

How can we really get to Zero Discrimination? This question was posed in facebook.com by Ms. Saifon Boonchoom, CCA Program Assistant on HIV and AIDS. I responded that we need to create spaces in our faith communities to meet with key affected populations and People Living with HIV (PLHIV+) and to learn from them. In this way we can begin to break the barrier between us and them because we see that we are all human beings with our own share of vulnerabilities.

Religious Leader Leads the Way in Singapore

A good example of changing paradigm for religious leaders is the continuing advocacy for people in the margins and exposure to key affected population by Rev. Dr. Yap Kim Hao, former CCA General Secretary and former Bishop of the Methodist Church in Malaysia, now based in Singapore and still active at age of 82. Dr. Yap decided to commit his life in the service of people normally shunned by society. He is now a pastor of the gay community in Singapore. He shared his experience in the Free Community Church during the Interfaith Conference on Diverse Voices, United Action organized by the Asian Interfaith Network on AIDS with support from various organizations including CCA.

Dr. Yap put into action what he had seen and heard in the Interfaith Conference in Busan on August 24-25, 2011, and organized the Singapore Interfaith Network on AIDS (SINA) on November 5, 2011. SINA is composed of loose grouping of representatives from Catholic, Christian and Buddhist groups. Dr. Yap cited the Catholic Aids and Response Effort, City Harvest Community Services Association,

Student Christian Movement and the Tzu Chi Foundation as examples.

Dr. Yap believes that religious leaders must be involved in reaching to those at risk. AIDS is still very much a taboo subject in Singapore and that includes the churches. He realized that it is important to provide education on HIV and AIDS to faith communities. AIDS is a public health problem and faith communities can be mobilized to help.

But despite the vast experiences of Dr. Yap in serving people in the margins, he continues to learn from others and write about them. Recently he visited the project of Bridget Lew called Yayasan Dunja Viva Wanita (YDVW), which seeks to empower women and changing the lives of slum dwellers in Batam. The aim of the project was to decrease vulnerability of people from engaging in trafficking and exploiting workers. Rev. Dr. Yap Kim Hao was interested to see how the project deals with HIV and AIDS. He first met with Pieter P



Rev. Dr. Yap Kim Hao

Pureklolong, Executive Secretary of the Commission on AIDS. Batam, Indonesia is known in Singapore as a sex tourist destination. He was informed that there was a 15% rise of 273 with HIV in 2009 to 317 in 2010. 77 had AIDS in 2009 and 134 in 2010. The number of deaths was 36 in 2009 and 74 in 2010. The government provides free testing and free AntiRetroViral (ARV) medication and free male and female condoms.

He visited the red light district and saw that there is a private clinic that offers medical services and counselling and safe sex education to sex workers. It was evident that there was close cooperation between the private and public agencies in addressing HIV and AIDS. Plans are underway to start an HIV and AIDS program to work on prevention and stigmatization, which is still common in the country. Dr. Yap also visited Batamindo, an industrial zone where he saw workers on strike for an increase of their minimum month wage from SGD189 to 200; Kampong Air close to a rubbish dumping site where YD VW has a comprehensive development program and Rumah Wanita, a shelter for abused women from domestic violence, migrant workers from other islands, victims of human trafficking and unmarried mothers. There is a program to provide safe space for women with the aim of integrating them into society. For Dr. Yap, the experience of being in the community and meeting key affected population and how they were provided safe space for comprehensive development was an “enriching experience which energises him for wide development services to marginalised communities.”

Everyone is Vulnerable to HIV

It is also important to remember that it is not only the key affected population that are at risk to HIV (Human Immunodeficiency Virus). In the SAVE Toolkit: A Practical Guide to the SAVE Prevention Methodology produced by the International Network of Religious Living with and personally Affected by HIV/AIDS (INERELA) and was launched in the Interfaith Conference on Diverse Voices, United Action in Busan, South Korea on August 24, we learned from

Rev. Johannes Petrus Heath that all of us are vulnerable through the ten questions he asked:

1. Have you ever had sex?
2. Have you ever had an injection?
3. Are you married?
4. Have you ever had an operation?
5. Had you ever had a blood transfusion?
6. Have you ever injected drugs?
7. Have you ever had a sexually transmitted infection?
8. Have you had children?
9. Have you ever travelled away from your sexual partner/spouse for more than two weeks?
10. Are you human?



If there are more YES answers to the above questions, the higher the risk of exposure to HIV.

HIV Situation

In 2010, there were an estimated:

- 34 million [31.6 million - 35.2 million] people globally living with HIV
- 2.7 million [2.4 million - 2.9 million] new HIV infections
- 1.8 million [1.6 million - 1.9 million] people who died of AIDS-related illnesses

In Asia, almost five million were estimated to be living with HIV. This is a big challenge for churches as communities expected to join the campaign. Together with other key actors in communities,

(L-R) Rev. Dr. Wati Longchar (hardly visible), Rev. Desmond M. Cox, Pramaha Boonchuay, Mr. Phichet Munpa, Dr. Samudtanee Jongjen and Rev. Sanan Wutti, at the Interfaith Conference in Busan, South Korea.

CCA is committed to joining this United Nation's call to Getting to Zero.

CCA's Role in Getting to Zero

CCA is assisting the churches in the goal of Getting to Zero through the seminars on building HIV Competent Churches and facilitating ecumenical and interfaith collaboration and networking. These seminars include exposure to key affected populations and what organizations are doing to address HIV and AIDS. In Asia partnership with other faith groups is important.

In the seminar on Building HIV Competent Churches for the Kampuchean Christian Council (KCC), participants visited the Salvation Centre Cambodia (SCC), an organization that is working through the network of pagodas run by Buddhist monks and nuns in Siem Reap, Phnom Pehn and Battambang. SCC provided the exposure program on HIV and AIDS in Siem Reap. Participants met with people who use drugs, saw the children living with HIV and orphan children who are trained in Khmer dance and music, and monks giving advice to PLHIV+ in the temple compound. Two pastors living with HIV gave their witness. Participants also listened to the report of the interfaith networks in Asia.

Pastor Ponsawan leading in singing and prayers during the opening worship at the seminar in Pattaya. The young man with guitar is her 17 year old son, Kad Khankaew.

One of the outcomes expected in the



seminars on building HIV Competent Churches is the development of HIV and AIDS Policy Statements to guide the work on HIV and AIDS of member churches. The National Council of Churches in the Philippines (NCCP) organized the seminar on building HIV Competent Churches on September 14-16, 2011. In October a committee drafted the HIV Policy and presented it to the Pre-Assembly of Women and Youth on November 19, 2011. The HIV Policy on "Creating Nurturing Communities of Care with People Living with HIV and AIDS" and the broad directions for the HIV program was approved by the ten member churches in the recently concluded 23rd General Convention on November 24, 2011.

The Seminar on Building HIV Competent Churches organized by the National Council of Churches in Bangladesh (NCCB) on October 13-15 challenged the participants to know HIV and AIDS better and to spread the message to their churches.

Meaningful Involvement of PLHIV

The meaningful participation of PLHIV+ was realized in the seminar in Pattaya, Thailand. The pastor living with HIV who joined the Training of Trainers on Building HIV Competent Churches in Yangon on June 18-24, 2011, organized the seminar. PLHIV+ who are actively involved in HIV and AIDS are the best persons to educate people on the best way to address HIV and AIDS.

Pastor Ponsawan also led the worship on the last day of the meeting of the Executive Committee. One of the Presidents of CCA, Rev. Fr. Rex Reyes gave this reflection on the witness of Pastor Ponsawan:

Last Saturday (September 10), the Executive Committee of the Christian Conference of Asia listened to the testimony of Pastor Ponsawan Khankaew. It was a powerful and moving testimony. Moving because it was a first person story - her life story. She told of her blindness and how one eye eventually gained sight. She talked of her isolation from her friends, from

the hospital and above all her isolation from her own pastor and the members of her community. She was dismissed as a hopeless case, a sinner and her community talked about rituals and customs related to her impending death. She also told of how her love for her two sons and the apparent love of her sons for her carried her through the painful ordeal. It was powerful because her testimony is a challenge to the church and Christians about our notions of sin, mission and pastoral responsibility. There she was - well recovered singing of her faith in a Jesus who stood by her and healed her. There she was opening up a ministry for people bearing the suffering she underwent by putting up the Adonai Church in Pattaya and the Glory Hut Foundation out of nothing but her indomitable spirit to minister to people isolated by others. There she was receiving, without resentment, referrals from pastors who still think they have nothing to do with people living with HIV and AIDS. May she live much longer than the fifteen years she prayed for. There she was singing of the victory that was hers in Jesus Christ and the joy of watching her two boys grow up in a hostile world. There is no other profound and genuine witness to the love of Jesus and His command to love than the testimony of our own lives.

Getting to Zero: An Aspirational Goal?

The recent news of cancelling Round 11 of the Global Fund on AIDS, TB, and Malaria due to diminishing resources from donor agencies is shocking to most countries who rely on their support for making available antiretroviral treatment, which is also now acknowledged by the scientific community as a prevention of AIDS-related diseases.

Will "Getting to Zero" become another aspirational goal promoted by the UN just like "Health for All by 2000"? This is however a laudable goal to work on.

Political will is expected of governments and intergovernmental organizations to provide ARV medications for all PLHIV+ and other medications for opportunistic infections; introduce harm reduction

approaches and safe spaces to meet with people who use drugs; offer reproductive health and clinics for sex workers; encourage the use of condoms as was shown to be effective in the campaign of Thailand and Cambodia; develop programs to empower women and men on safe sex and also ensure that negotiating skills on safe sex is



taught; practice gender equity and justice; stop criminalizing people with different sexual orientation; stop travel restrictions for PLHIV+; provide health insurance for PLHIV+; encourage male circumcision, and provide livelihood that will generate income for education and nutrition for the family. Faith communities need to provide greater spiritual accompaniment for the PLHIV+ so that they are not judged, stigmatized and discriminated. Faith communities should help stop judgmental attitudes, stigma and discrimination of PLHIV+.

Zero discrimination will not require money. It would only require opening minds and hearts to accept diversity. If we could only be infected by the enthusiasm of an 82 year old church leader like Rev. Dr. Yap Kim Hao, then we can at least push through with one of the goals of Getting to Zero - Zero Discrimination.

"Truly, I tell you, whatever you did to the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me." (Matthew 25: 40)

A group work in Bangladesh on deciding whether a woman living with HIV can marry or not and have baby. The group discussion revealed that they can. Another group decided if they marry they have to use condom and if they want to be pregnant they have to go to the doctor for advice.

Erlinda Senturias

CCA News • December 2011 • 19

No more bases in Okinawa

*Takao Takeda,
Nichirenshu
Nipponzan Myohoji
Buddhist, Japan;
Father Kazuyoshi
Ookura, Catholic
Council for Justice
and Peace, Japan;
Park Mun-Sook,
South Korea;
Rev. Fr. Rex Reyes,
National Council
of Churches in the
Philippines.*



More than 220 people joined exposure groups and participated in the 3rd Article 9 Conference in Naha, Okinawa, Japan on 4-7 October 2011.

The Okinawa people have expressed their opposition to any new base construction in their island after years of suffering from loss sovereignty, native culture and traditional livelihood as a result of the presence of US bases in their island.

Speakers from Okinawa who grew up with the bases, Buddhist monks, Christian leaders, and a Pakistani human rights advocate took turns in enumerating the negative impact of any new base on the lives of the people and the threat they pose for peace and people's security.

A very powerful witness was shared by Kinjo Shigeaki, who witnessed the "forced mass deaths" of the population in the islands of Zamami, Geruma and Tokashiki, instigated by the "ko-gun", the Japanese imperial army.

He took the responsibility of putting away members of his family, including his mother and younger brothers and sisters.

At the Conference, moved by this powerful story, Ms Rebecca Asedillo, Asia Mission Secretary for the Board of Global Ministries of the United Methodist Church in the US, shared her reflections on the dark and painful incident. Ms Asedillo's reflections are featured in this issue of CCA News.

A peace march along the main thoroughfares of Okinawa City was held by the participants carrying banners saying 'no to wars and yes to peace'.

A press conference was held at St. Barnabas Anglican Church in Kagurazaka, Tokyo, where nine participants in the Okinawa Conference participated, including Cory Bently, Jonathan Frerichs, Takeda Takao, Junaid Ahmad, Jeong Jin Woo and Carlos Ocampo who spoke about their experiences at the conference, as

well as Wendy Yamamoto, Liberato Bautista, Debbie Umipig-Julian, Shabnam Ahmad, Jeoung Sang Duk, and Lee Hun Sam who attended. David McIntosh did the English interpretation of the panelists.

There were about 50 in attendance with press from Ecumenical News International, The Christ Weekly, Christian Shimbun (Newspaper), The Catholic Weekly of Japan and a number of Buddhist media outlets including Bukkyo (Buddhist) Times. The Christ Weekly published a front page article on Oct. 22nd, which covered the gist of the conference, participating organizations and a rundown of the six demands spelled out in the statement.

The third Conference in Okinawa was organized by the National Council of Churches in Japan and hosted by the Okinawa Christian University. The preceding two Conferences were held in Tokyo in 2007 and Seoul in 2009.

CCA was represented by the Rev. Rex R.B. Reyes, General Secretary, National Council of Churches in the Philippines (NCCP), and Professor Junaid Ahmad, Law and Policy Faculty Member of the Lahore University of Management Sciences.

Carlos Ocampo, CCA Executive Secretary for Justice, International Affairs, Development and Service, is a member of the International Working Group on Article 9 Campaign, representing CCA.

Carlos Ocampo

Panelists in the press conference include Takao Takeda, Buddhist clergy; Carlos Ocampo, CCA; Cory Bentley, United Church of Canada; Jeong Jin Woo, NCC Japan; Jonathan Frerichs, WCC; and interpreters David McIntosh and George Gish, NCC Japan.



Cry of the Earth and the poor are one

The North American Consultation on Poverty, Wealth and Ecology

More than sixty church leaders, theologians, and social activists gathered at the FCJ Center in Calgary, Alberta Province in Canada on 6-11 November 2011, in a Consultation on Poverty, Wealth and Ecology in North America.

The Consultation issued a call on respective governments to govern with integrity by implementing a moratorium on further development of the tar sands; compelling corporations to operate with the highest available environmental and labour standards wherever they do business on the globe; prohibiting excessive interest rates; legislating an international financial transactions tax to begin to make restitution for ecological debt; reallocating budgets from the military and systems of death and destruction to systems that promote the abundance of life; working for a new financial architecture; and ensuring that commercial banking is clearly separated from investment banking (speculative investments and financial transactions).

The Consultation process went through confession, wisdom, healing and thanksgiving and reflected these in the Consultation Statement.

The following are excerpts from the Consultation:

On confession

We confess that the whole of Creation bears the marks of God. God is our Creator; we love God, all of Creation and one another. We see that God wants the world to be a circle where everyone has a place. However, in North America, we have failed to live out our love.

While we have failed to live out our love, corporations have pursued violent

development grabbing air, land and water; drowning islands; desertifying lands; violating human rights; and creating conditions of war.

In our limitless pursuit of individual and national wealth and power, we are complicit in a market system that exploits natural resources and people within and beyond our borders:

When temporary foreign workers care for our children and grandparents, work on our farms, receive low wages, work long hours, live and work in harsh conditions, are vulnerable to abuse, have their human rights violated, fill other jobs that the common excuse says "no North American would do."

We have left undone those things which we ought to have done; and we have done those things which we ought not to have done.

On wisdom

We are compelled and inspired by this vision of hope with respect to poverty, wealth and ecology, a new vision of Earth and the people who are dependent upon its abundance.

There is a new world in the making. You are working on behalf of Your people and restoring the good Earth You created. This world matters as do people's concrete struggles within it. It is our reminder to care for each other and all of Creation. You are a God of redemption, not of destruction, and invite us to participate in redemptive acts.

On Healing

Creator, You endowed all of Your Creation with dignity, including human beings, a shining strand in the glimmering web of life.

Yet today, Creation is not the way it is supposed to be. We've seen the toxic pools, the gouged Earth, the forecasts of increased global average temperatures that will permanently change life on Earth. Climate change is the enveloping reality we live in.

We are alarmed by the increased concentration of wealth owned by a few. We know that poverty strips dignity away. Holy Spirit, come quickly. We are poor, we are rich; we are oppressed, we are oppressors. Reconcile us to one another, reconcile us with Earth. May the churches we represent be agents of reconciliation, centres for caring communities and shared sacrifice, models of an ethic of solidarity with future generations and our neighbours. Light us with a passion for justice, peace and solidarity.

International sharing and solidarity

Franklin Canelos from the Latin American Council of Churches; Puleng Lengka Bula, from South Africa; Setha Hardessian, Middle East Council of Churches; and Carlos Ocampo, Christian Conference of Asia shared their particular encounters on Poverty, Wealth and Ecology.

Exposure encounters include group immersions in Calgary, particularly flying over the tar sands area, aboriginal life and culture, and migrant workers. Major discussions on the North American contextual theology, economy and ecology.

Main presentation on North American contextual theology was presented by Dr. Elizabeth Hinson-Hasty of Bellarmine University, while the result of the study



Participants role playing PWE in North America.

On thanksgiving

We give thanks for young people who are inventing new forms of resistance to greed and injustice through forums like the Occupy movement and the "people's microphone."

We give thanks for the prophets among us who challenge our idolatry of the unregulated Market and who confront us with our addiction to the carbon economy. We give thanks for the witness of those of our ancestors who have taught us our rightful place in Creation and who have spoken truth to power; who understood that Christ is found among those who are hungry, homeless, imprisoned and downtrodden.

on economics and its impact on poor communities in North America was undertaken and reported by Dr. John Dillon of KAIROS Canada.

The organizing of the Consultation was provided leadership by a team led by Ms Joy Kennedy, and the WCC AGAPE staff, Dr. Rogate Mshana and Ms Athena Peralta.

The urgency of the situation was expressed at the conclusion of the Consultation: "It is the 11th hour. Make haste. The cry of the Earth and the cry of the poor are one."

An update

Humanitarian aid to North Korea

In early November, I attended the 7th International Conference on Humanitarian and Development Aid to North Korea. This Seoul conference was jointly sponsored by the Korean Sharing Movement, Gyonggi Province in the Republic of Korea and Friedrich Ebert Stiftung.

Attending this series of meetings is always nostalgic for me because I organized the very first one attended by over 150 international humanitarian practitioners in Beijing in 1998 and I participated in almost every one to be a keynote speaker or a panelist. This year I gave a presentation on the United States Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO) food aid experience from July 2008 to March 2009 when they managed and monitored US government food aid. I was then the National Director for North Korea of World Vision International.

This year's event was very special because the former Executive Director of the World Food Program (WFP) was a special guest. In 1996-1997, I worked with her to set up the Food Aid Liaison Group of the WFP in Pyongyang and the first head of FALU, Erich Weingartner, was also a participant at the conference. Erich Weingartner is known to many people in the ecumenical movement as a former staff of the World Council of Churches International Affairs Commission. So it was a wonderful reunion for the three of us.

We heard reports about the worsening humanitarian crisis from the WFP Country Director in North Korea, an NGO representative from North Korea and an American NGO representative who headed a food assessment mission in North Korea this year. Together they presented a deeply concerning picture of the worsening plight of the most vulnerable such as children under five-year old and the elderly. Among the information that I learned:

- After years of chronic food shortage, malnutrition is affecting a whole generation of North Koreans. North Koreans, especially children, urgently need outside aid to fight terrible levels of malnutrition.
- Out of a population of over twenty million six million urgently need nutrition inputs. North Korea has a shortage of one million tons of

food each year.

- Rice yields are about 2.8 tons per hectare affected by soil degradation, lack of fertilizers and limited mechanization.
- Nearly half of North Korean children are chronically malnourished. The world must be reminded that the most vulnerable groups in North Korea are victims of a situation over which they have no control.
- Supply shortages means that daily rations from the public distribution system (PDS) were halved in July to 200 grams per person.
- The international community is not giving enough. In April, the United Nations appealed for \$218 million in emergency aid. Only one-third of that amount has been pledged.
- The US government asked US NGOs to send their own team in May – to assess the humanitarian situation. But it has yet to announce a decision on aid. The five American NGOs recommended prompt action with immediate shipments.
- David Austin, North Korea program director for Mercy Corps said that the NGOs saw pockets of malnutrition “throughout the country” and that people there “are starving to death.”
- The United States, along with other nations, made token contribution to flood assistance in mid-September. Washington provided a grant \$900,000 in flood relief for the North through five US NGOs.
- South Korea maintains that there is no nationwide food crisis of the kind that killed many thousands in the late 1990s.
- According to the head of the Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, Valerie Amos, who made her first visit in October, North Korea will continue to face food shortages unless its government addresses “major structural issues” and attracts investment. She also insisted that the responsibility for solving repeated food crises lay with the country's government and its

need to tackle the underlying causes of poor agricultural production.

The resumption of talks between the USA and North Korea on October 24-25, 2011 in Geneva has given optimism to a resumption of humanitarian aid by the international community. In the 6-party talks, it was agreed in September 2005 that if North Korea would abandon its nuclear programs there would be economic assistance and diplomatic incentives from other parties to the six-party talks, which include China, Japan, Russia and South Korea, and the United States.

In a meeting with the U.N. Secretary General in New York, on Monday November 4, South Korea's unification minister, Yu Woo-ik, said the ROK is considering sending humanitarian aid to North Korea through third channels such as WFP.

The Unification Ministry says South Korea stopped sending direct aid to Pyongyang in November 2010 after it accused North Korea of shelling Yeonpyeong Island, killing four South Koreans. In the past, South Korea has sent aid through the WFP, the World Health Organization and other international agencies.

The UN announced on November 25 that North Korea even with the most optimistic estimates will

“Although improved with the new harvest, the situation remains precarious, especially on a nutritional level,” Arif Husain of the World Food Program's food security analysis unit in Rome said in a statement. “Humanitarian support in the form of fortified blended foods for the most vulnerable continues to be critical.” Nearly 3 million North Koreans would continue to require food aid next year.

“Some pediatric wards indicated that cases admitted for malnutrition since April had doubled compared to the same period in 2010.....A lack of protein, fats and vital vitamins and minerals continues to compromise proper physical and intellectual development into adulthood.”

On the same day, South Korea announced that one of its officials was invited to enter North Korea recently to help monitor the distribution of flour donated by a civic group. This is now being perceived as a positive development in relief agencies' demand for more transparency.

Victor Hsu

Dr. Victor Shu is visiting Professor at the Korea Development Institute School of Public Policy and Management, in Seoul, South Korea.



need to import 739,000 tons of grain in 2012. The joint United Nations team stayed in North Korea for 10 days, visiting 29 counties across the country.

The National Council of Churches in Korea delegation on a humanitarian mission to North Korea on November 11, 2011, bringing 180 tonnes of flour. (Photo: Chang Hwie Lee)

Training HR advocates

Eleven (11) human rights workers participated in a CCA Human Rights Advocacy Training Course held at the Bangkok Christian Guesthouse in Bangkok's Silom district on 17-21 October 2011. The trainees were nominated by their respective churches and NCCs from Indonesia (5), the Philippines (2), and one each from India, Sri Lanka, Vietnam and Thailand.

The training featured two sessions on Human Rights and the United Nations, human rights documentation, effective advocacy, country national human rights situations, and two sessions of national and regional preparation of human rights advocacy plans.

Mr. Wong Kai Shing emphasized the need to monitor compliance by countries that signed UN human rights conventions and protocols, as a way of making governments responsible for protecting the rights of their own people.

Bible Professor at Union Theological Seminary in the Philippines, the Rev. Revelation Velunta in his biblical reflections on Isaiah 58: 6-7, Matthew 25: 31-46 and Luke 4: 18-19 reminded and challenged the participants that soup is more than food for the hungry and drink for the thirsty. It is also just wages for workers, homes for the homeless, justice for the oppressed, care for the sick and dying, welcome to the stranger, land for the landless, liberation for those in bondage and captivity, solidarity with those whose only hope is God.

Velunta shared the vision of abundant life in John 10:10 "as God's promise of life abundant as a hot bowl of soup. For countless people who face the violence of starvation each and every moment of their lives, God's shalom is a hot bowl of soup".

Resource persons Debbie Stothard and Anelyn de Luna discussed effective documentation as a



HR training participants, resource persons and staff

strategic component of human rights advocacy. Ms Stothard shared inspiring insights and experiences in working on advocacy for the Myanmar people who have been struggling for their rights for almost thirty years with colorful maps and anecdotes that inspired the participants.

Stories from Bogor and Kupang in Indonesia, Tarlac and Palawan in the Philippines, Mae Sot in Thailand, Colombo in Sri Lanka, and Hyderabad, Andhra Pradesh in India were shared. Participants prepared their national advocacy plans, and a regional cyberspace website was introduced to enable the trainees to continue communicating their human rights concerns and advocacy with each other.

Throughout the week of training, Bangkok had been threatened by floodwaters from the Ping River, which had overflowed its banks and many areas outside the business district was flooded. This weather disturbance did not dampen the enthusiasm of the training participants.

Carlos Ocampo

UCC stays in Toronto

Fifty-three (53) members and corresponding members of the United Church of Canada (UCC) General Council Executive in its meeting on 12-14 November 2011, voted on the proposal to relocate the General Council Office. This inclination to stay in Toronto carries a strong consideration to touching the ground and more creativity and flexibility in Toronto.

This is when UCC is still dealing with its vision and the transition necessary in the next ten years. A reference group in Council has been appointed to progress the preparations for the forthcoming General Council in August 2012. Other major agenda items in the Meeting include the Moderator Accountability report,

the General Secretary supervision, nomination of UCC representatives to the 2013 WCC Assembly in Busan, South Korea and other committees within and outside the UCC, strengthening the ministry to the Francophone constituency, and pastoral relations, oversight and discipline processes.

In the session on global partners on Sunday morning, 13 November, Carlos Ocampo, from CCA - JID did a power point presentation on the emerging geopolitical trends in Asia and CCA's role in resourcing and accompanying the Asian churches in conflict situations and invited the churches in Canada's support and solidarity.

Carlos Ocampo

Ocampo delivers lecture at NCCP convention

Mr. Carlos Ocampo, CCA Executive Secretary for Justice, International Affairs, Development and Service (JID), delivered the distinguished Gumersindo Garcia Memorial Lecture at the 23rd General Convention of the National Council of Churches in the Philippines (NCCP). Ocampo's presentation traced the historical journey of Filipinos in their struggle for justice under the theme, "To hunger and struggle for justice - a continuing struggle with the Filipino people".

The Rev. Dr. Henriette Hutabarat Lebang, CCA General Secretary, also gave greetings on behalf of CCA.

Church representatives from nine member churches and five associate member organizations gathered at the Philippine Rice Research Center in Batac, Ilocos Norte on 21-24 November 2011, under the theme, "Holding high the tapestry of justice and peace in a broken world". The agenda include the Report of the General Secretary, Report of the Corporate Treasurer, reports of Committees, business sessions, and election of officers for the 2012-2015 quadrennium.

Officers elected to lead NCCP in the 2012-2015 quadrennium are Obispo Maximo Ephraim Fajutagana of the Iglesia Filipina Independiente (IFI); Vice Chairpersons Bishop Reuel Marigza, United Church of Christ in the Philippines; Ms Guia del Rosario, Lutheran Church in the Philippines; and Ms Sheila Marie Cortez, United Methodist Church. Elected Treasurer is Ms Mercedes Kimwell, IEMELIEF; and the Rev. Fr. Rex Resurrection Reyes was elected for a second term as General Secretary.



Creative presentations by the youth were organized under the leadership of the Rev. Dr. Rommel Linatoc, NCCP Executive Director for Christian Unity and Ecumenical Relations.

Retired Supreme Court Chief Justice Reynato S. Puno presented the Bishop La Verne D. Mercado Memorial Lecture entitled "Social Justice in the Philippines: Facts and Law", tracing the historical developments undergone by the Philippine Constitution of 1935 and 1987, highlighting the critique of the impact of laws on the marginalized and vulnerable sectors in Philippine society.

The closing worship service and installation of the newly elected officers were held at the IFI Cathedral in Pinili, Ilocos Norte on 24th November.

Carlos Ocampo

Ecumenism and evangelicalism

Two sides of a coin in proclaiming Christ

Prior to my attending the Basic Ecumenical Course (BEC 2011) in Yogyakarta, Indonesia, the word “ecumenism” has been much feared about. This fear stems from the initial understanding of the ‘unfortunate marriage’ between ecumenism and liberalism, placing ecumenism in opposition to evangelicalism, and compounded further by efforts to promote distinctive identities in the Malaysian local church scene.

Gratefully, BEC provided me an opportunity to approach ecumenism with boldness and hopefulness. Ecumenism does not merely encourage the Church to focus on Herself, but to be an active and responsible member of the household of God; to be outward looking, being the “church for others”. Rather than being continuously constrained by evident differences in theological emphasis, religious teachings and ethnicity, the Church is to place more efforts on finding commonalities.

Ecumenism should never be placed in opposition to evangelicalism. Being ecumenical does not make one not evangelical, as we can yet proclaim Christ in the way we connect with people of other faiths - through the way we live our lives. Religiosity in diversity is possible when we remove the ‘conquering’ mentality in our approach to people of other faiths. However, it should not be wrongly taken that “all religions lead to one God”, but that our belief in Christ as the Way,

the Truth and the Life does not force others to follow suit. That is the work of the Holy Spirit. Our responsibility is to create more opportunities for the Holy Spirit to work through our acts of being ecumenical, of being an active member of God’s household. Instead of directing all our efforts in the “how to conquer” other faiths for God, why not “win them over” through our active concern about injustices in the world?

Being ecumenical and evangelical are to be seen as two sides of one coin. One cannot claim to proclaim Christ if one pours one’s self into social action without an active personal relationship with Christ and fellowship with other members of the Church. In the same manner, one cannot claim to proclaim Christ if one only concerns one’s self with converting people and in ‘planting’ churches. The Church is called to be the salt of the earth, which means to spread all around to “preserve” the earth, rather than remain salty within the bottle.

To be an effective “preserver” of the earth, the process of making the salt is crucial. One should be continually renewed by the Word. Ecumenism without the foundation of evangelicalism is not ecumenism; evangelicalism without the action of ecumenism is not evangelicalism. Both ecumenism and evangelicalism require each other to present a complete message of the Gospel.

It has to be said that being evangelical

does not mean 'winning' over people of other faiths with active indoctrination; it means 'winning' them over with the way our lives is being lived. The ecumenical approach presents us this opportunity to become evangelical in the context of proclaiming Christ through our response to injustices around the world. It is not with the intention of influencing people to eventually cross over to our side, but of proclaiming the love of Christ over the fallen world. Our concern is to proclaim Christ at every given opportunity, proclaiming Christ's justice over injustices, Christ's grace for the sinful and Christ's unending love for the love-less. Ecumenism helps us to present Christ through our lives - Christ's true incarnation.

In a nutshell, being ecumenical is answering the call of "...creation waiting with eager longing for the revealing of the children of God (Rom 8:19). As children of God, being evangelical causes us to follow the footsteps

of Christ of doing only what Christ has done; while being ecumenical motivates us to care for God's creation - the call of Oikoumene.

Liew Min Kang, Kenneth

Kenneth Liew, in his own words, is "a blessed Malaysian, is currently in his final-year as a seminary student. He dreams of a whole Church that proclaims the whole gospel of Christ to the whole world; through being active in both evangelism and social engagement."

Kenneth Liew with (left to right) Hope Antone, Olvi Prihutami, and Nicole Yit.



Creating a culture of peace

Yesterday, these words of Mr. Kinjo Shigeaki, spoken through an interpreter, gripped me with such force that I wanted to weep. He said:

"I wanted to end my life, but I lived for a purpose - I owe that purpose to God who suffers with me. From the point of my inner death, I was reborn, and now I am focused on living fully..."

Creating a culture of peace out of a mindset built around making war takes more than diplomacy, strategic alliances, and an astute knowledge of geopolitics. It even takes more than community organizing, mobilizing around campaigns, and doing civil disobedience. That element of "more" is the spirit - the motivation, the will and the driving force - that infuses our every effort to clarify the vision, and every step taken to move towards that vision.

We are an interreligious gathering. That being our nature, it is inherent for us to act out of the core values of our various faith traditions. Essentially such core values call us to obedience to a mandate higher than our own self-interest and self-preservation and on behalf of the greater good.

But how do we describe this "greater good?" It is not absolute loyalty to the emperor, nor to any existing empire. It is not blind nationalism with its insidious intent to maintain certain people, caste, class, and other structures in power. The "greater good" is that which enables individuals, communities and nations to see their interconnectedness with each other - where the "one" is enfolded in the "other" - and together they form the "whole." In other words, the greater good is, as referred to by the speaker before me, is the "common good."

On October 4-5, several of us participated in an exposure trip around Okinawa. That experience made us aware of the indescribable horror to which people in Okinawa have been subjected, memories of which will forever be etched in the collective consciousness of Okinawans as a people, and of Japan as a nation. Such exposures



Ms. Rebecca Asedillo, Executive Secretary, Asia Pacific Mission Relationships, Mission & Evangelism Unit of the General Board of Global Ministries of the United Methodist Church, USA.

also made us aware of the incredible strength and power of the people's resistance. More than victims and survivors, beyond being victimizers and accomplices to imperial designs, Okinawans are rising to claim victory of a cause which affirms that the path to peace is the way into the future.

We are here - I am here - to walk that path with you.

To quote Mr. Kinjo again,

"I wanted to end my life, but I lived for a purpose - I owe that purpose to God who suffers with me. From the point of my inner death, I was reborn, and now I am focused on living fully..."

Rebecca Asedillo

Ms. Asedillo shared this reflection at the 3rd Article 9 Conference in Naha, Okinawa, Japan on 4th to 7th October 2011.

In special focus

The 2012 Asia Sunday

Traditionally, Asia Sunday is celebrated every year a week before Pentecost to commemorate the birth of CCA. This is an opportunity for us to specifically connect, remember and pray for each other as a fellowship of Asian churches through CCA. For 2012, the celebration of Asia Sunday falls on **May 20, 2012**, but local congregations are free to choose any other date as is suitable to their schedule.

The theme of the 2012 Asia Sunday is in the spirit of prayer,

“Make us reconcilers, O God!”

In the midst of many conflicts and divisions in our world today, including in the life of our family, church and community, we are called to seriously undertake the ministry of reconciliation. It requires our humility to go beyond our prejudices and accept each other as creation of God.

CCA seeks your collaboration to kindly translate this liturgy into the language of the congregations, to adjust it into your context as you find it necessary, and to circulate it as widely as possible. We appeal to you that in this occasion a special offering is collected to support the CCA Emergency Fund. The details of the this fund are found below.

The Liturgy for the 2012 Asia Sunday has been circulated via email and it is also available from the CCA website (www.cca.org.hk). CCA hopes that you will be able to integrate the celebration of Asia Sunday in the agenda and especially in the 2012 lectionary of your church as a member of CCA.

The CCA Emergency Fund

In contexts where churches, councils and communities at-large in Asia become victims due to recurring earthquakes, volcanic eruption, floods, tsunamis, etc., CCA deems it important to build an Emergency Fund, keep it on reserve and use it at the right time.

As mandated by the 13th CCA Assembly in April 2010 in Kuala Lumpur, the CCA Emergency Fund was created to enable CCA to:

- **Organize immediate visits to see firsthand the damages caused and find out how to assist churches and councils in responding to the emergency situation.** The initial visit provides CCA with information to inform the CCA family about the situation so that they can be in solidarity with the affected people and the churches in the countries where the tragedy has taken place.
- **Facilitate visits of accompaniment, at times by a small team consisting of members from the CCA family.** The

visits aim to assist churches to work out their own relief and rehabilitation work in collaboration with Action by Churches Together (ACT) International or other major donors.

CCA's role is purely accompaniment where it equips and empowers the local churches to be in mission and to respond effectively to the need of the times. The implementors are the local churches and the national councils.

We thus appeal to you to contribute to the CCA Emergency Fund, by sending your contributions to:

Account name: **Christian Conference of Asia**
Bank: **Hang Seng Bank**
Branch: **Hankow Road (4 Hankow Road, Kowloon, Hong Kong SAR, China)**
Account No.: **295 - 4 - 709594**
Account Type: **Multi-Currencies Account**
Swift Code: **HASEHKHH**

A Prayer for Reconciliation

Leader: Dear God, we come to you from our fragmented lives and divided communities, for you are the source of our reconciliation and wholeness. Help us to be at peace with ourselves by remembering your gift of reconciliation through Christ Jesus.

People: Make us reconcilers, O God, as you have reconciled us to you.

Leader: Dear God, we pray for communities caught up in violence in Kandhamal, India, whose houses and worship places were razed to the ground. May they find hope for the future as they continue trusting in your love and mercy.

People: Make us reconcilers, O God, as you have reconciled us to you.

Leader: Help us to bring peace where neighbor is set against neighbor, and where people regard each other as enemies.

People: Make us reconcilers, O God, as you have reconciled us to you.

Leader: Help us to stand with the Okinawan people in Japan and those in Kangjeong Village in the Jeju Island, South Korea, as they face the construction of new bases in their islands, who have suffered for many years in the aftermath of wars, and whose livelihood and culture have been lost to alienating industrial development.

People: Make us reconcilers, O God, as you have reconciled us to you.

Leader: Help us to bring justice where the weak and helpless are beaten by the mighty, and where people look down on others as lower to them in status.

People: Make us reconcilers, O God, as you have reconciled us to you.

Leader: Help us defend people who are being arrested, detained or even killed as they

actively work for peace, justice and human dignity in the Philippines, Myanmar, Sri Lanka, West Papua in Indonesia and other countries in Asia.

People: Make us reconcilers, O God, as you have reconciled us to you.

Leader: Help us to bring freedom where children are forced to fight, where women are trafficked as sex objects or cheap labor, where people are discriminated due to disease, disability or other orientations in life.

People: Make us reconcilers, O God, as you have reconciled us to you.

Leader: Help us to advocate and defend the rights of farmers losing their lands to mining companies that place profits over people and their right to their land and access to productive resources.

People: Make us reconcilers, O God, as you have reconciled us to you.

Leader: Help us to bring care and connectedness to your creation where greed and abuse have caused a lot of destruction.

People: Make us reconcilers, O God, as you have reconciled us to you.


Leader: Help us to bring humility where people depend upon their strength and beliefs rather than depending on you.

People: Make us reconcilers, O God, as you have reconciled us to you.

Leader: Help us to acknowledge our divisions and bless our willingness to reconcile to each other to become one body in Christ and as credible instruments of reconciliation in the world.

People: Make us reconcilers, O God, as you have reconciled us to you. Amen.

(taken from the Asia Sunday 2012 liturgy)



Anti-POSCO Protesters in Orissa, India, 'Hugging the Earth' in the face of police and government authorities trying to forcibly acquire their land. (Photo: POSCO Pratirodh Sangram Samity)