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cca news



'Being Together under the Cross'



In This Issue • CCA–WCC Pastoral Solidarity Visit to Indonesia
Harare: An Asian Perspective • CCA General Committee Meeting
Asia Sunday 1999: Myanmar

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EDITORIAL

Last year ended with a flurry of important but energy-draining activities. Six members of the CCA staff travelled to Harare to be a part of the Jubilee Assembly of the World Council of Churches, immediately after our General Committee and related meetings in Kerala, India, which were held 19–26 November. Throughout the month of October, several of us had to pitch in to provide staff work for the Asia Ecumenical Course that was held in Thailand. The 'Delhi events', reported in the last issue of *CCA News*, occupied us throughout the month of September. So we were literally tired, and some of us were in fact sick, when we all returned to Hong Kong for the Christmas break.

We returned to work in January however, exhilarated and re-energised, recognising that the year we left behind had its harvest of good results, some disappointments and difficulties, but above all some clear signs of new beginnings.

Harare was disappointing in many ways. It seemed more like a 'containment assembly' rather than one that was looking and stepping forward. The 'Padare' process that dominated a large portion of the program seemed to disperse issues rather than focus them. In the end, however, the covenant made by the churches fifty years ago to stay together remains intact, even when there are continuing questions ahead, and the World Council can move forward with a more sober sense of its 'common understanding and vision'.

The General Committee in Kerala also had its difficult moments. In the end, however, it made the critical decisions that will pave the way for a more open consideration of future life and work for the ecumenical movement in Asia. The basic framework for the planning of the 2000 General Assembly was laid down. A 'vision and structure' proposal was authorised for circulation and discussion among member churches and councils that hopefully will lead to some decisions being made at the Assembly on this. Program directions and activities are clear for the next year and a half. A work rhythm for the staff has been established. The financial condition remains fragile but is now balanced and stable.

Meanwhile, new members of the staff were appointed even as some new vacancies were announced. Ahn Jaewoong of Korea and Daniel S. Thiagarajah of Sri Lanka joined us in January to assume the posts of Associate General Secretary for Finance and Executive Secretary for Mission and Evangelism respectively. Lakshmi Daniel of India also started work in January as a Consultant for Theological Concerns. They represent seasoned, fresh and very capable replenishment for work in CCA. Feeling more confident with our financial situation, the General Committee authorised the announcement of new vacancies for executive staff for URM and Women's Concerns, with appointments to be made by the Executive Committee in May this year. By the middle of this year, a replenished and fuller staff complement will continue to assume work already begun to prepare the ground for the 2000 Assembly and to fulfil remaining program mandates for the rest of the term. A greater sense of confidence with resources, a clearer corporate feeling of what needs to be done and some new hands to do work together has provided a sense of settled peace as we started 1999—the Year of the Rabbit in the Chinese calendar. It has also given more vigour to move more creatively towards the next phases of CCA life.

Feliciano V. Cariño

Turn to God—Rejoice in Hope

The Eighth Assembly of the World Council of Churches Harare, Zimbabwe, 3–14 December 1998 Being Together under the Cross in Africa

An Assembly of the World Council of Churches (WCC) is very many things to very many people. This was particularly true of the 8th Assembly that was held in Harare, Zimbabwe, 3–14 December 1998. It was, much to the surprise of organisers, the largest ever in terms of numbers of participants. More than 4,000 came, from all parts of the world, from member and non-member churches and a wide variety of Christian groups and organisations. To many, the Assembly was worship. To others, business meetings—constitutional and structural adjustments and elections.

To others, programs. A major part of Harare's program were 'padare' offerings, numbering more than 400, dealing with a vast number of issues spanning ecclesiological, economic, social, political and cultural concerns. Finally, to others it was presentations, statements and declarations. Harare was all of these: celebration, business, programs, statements and issues. But above all it was about 'being together', and in Harare, it was 'Being Together under the Cross in Africa'. The Assembly Message below sums it up best.

Feliciano V. Cariño

Called by the drums of Africa we gathered in Harare, Zimbabwe, as representatives of over 300 churches at the 8th Assembly of the World Council of Churches. We greeted our brothers and sisters in Jesus Christ throughout the world who share and rejoice with us in the life and fellowship of the Holy Trinity.

Fifty years ago the World Council of Churches began its journey of faith with the Assembly in Amsterdam and clearly affirmed: 'We intend to stay together.' Our pilgrimage through Evanston, New Delhi, Uppsala, Nairobi, Vancouver and Canberra has led us to rejoice in the hope, mission, vision, freedom, life and renewal that God gives.

The theme of this Assembly, 'Turn to God—Rejoice in Hope', was an invitation to look again to the very foundation of our faith and life as churches, finding there the hope that will draw us on.

In this our jubilee year we proclaim good news to the poor, release to the captives, recovery of sight to the blind, freedom to the oppressed, and the year of the Lord's favour.

Meeting in joyful assembly, we invited one another and the whole church to journey towards visible unity, which is God's gift and call to us. We have found that Christ is both the centre of our unity and our living water of life. We confess that we have often turned away from God's purposes and from serving God's reign. For this we grieve and repent.

The life of the Assembly has revolved around worship, prayer and Bible study. At the centre of the place of worship stood a great carved cross with the continent of Africa at its heart. It is indeed part of the joy of this assembly that we were in Africa. Here we experience the life, growth and vitality of faith in local congregations. We rejoiced in the beauty and wonder of God's creation. We remembered that it was to Africa that the Holy Family with the infant Jesus came as refugees, and today Africa like every other continent is a place where many people are displaced, homeless and refugees.

Drawn by the power of the cross, we have been reminded that the cross is the most holy ground before which the

very sandals of God are removed. We have seen all around us the suffering and pain of humankind. We encountered the alarming problems of poverty, unemployment and homelessness, which are here as they are everywhere. We have heard of the devastating effects of globalisation and structural adjustments as those who are weak and powerless find themselves becoming increasingly 'invisible'. We have listened as our sisters and brothers have shared with us the grim reality of the debt crisis in the developing world. We call for the cancellation of debt in a manner that benefits the poor and marginalised, and respects their human rights.

We have longed to touch those suffering from HIV/AIDS. We have stood alongside our brothers and sisters with disabilities, who bring a gift to those who are handicapped in relating to them. We have heard the voice of the indigenous peoples among us, claiming the place that is theirs by right. We have heard from women, children, refugees and displaced persons whose

lives have been ravaged by violence. We have been challenged to express our solidarity with them, and to commit ourselves to overcome violence and to promote the full human dignity of all. By going to those at the periphery God causes commotion, making this periphery the centre. As churches, we are called to make these sons and daughters of God truly visible.

With the symbol of life-giving water, we marked the completion of the Ecumenical Decade of the Churches in Solidarity with Women, listening to the all-too-often painful reality revealed in the Living Letter and hearing the call that solidarity be followed by accountability. As it flows on parched ground, water is essential to life. Jesus offered to the woman at the well the living water, the healing and new life she so desperately needed. The call of God was presented again and again in the use of water. We were invited to drink the water of salvation, and to affirm our unity with all those incorporated into Christ. We were called to help and comfort the lonely, the bereaved, or-

phans, and the destitute, and to keep thirsting until the wounds of the world are healed.

We have wrestled with how we might foster greater participation at every level of the ecumenical movement, and the way in which decision-making can reflect the needs and expectations of those coming from many and varied traditions and cultures. We celebrated the leadership shown by young people, which has been so apparent in the life of this Assembly. We urge the churches to ensure space for the involvement of young people in every aspect of the life and ministries of the church.

Drawn together by God's love, we have sought to understand more what it is to be together. We have explored how we understand the World Council of Churches and the ways in which God has called us to look forward together. We have rejoiced in the developing *koinonia* (communion) between Christians in many parts of the world, and we affirm once again that God has called us to continue to grow in that communion together, that it may be truly visible. We rejoice in signs of this growth such as the hope for a common date of Easter.

We have also experienced the pain brought by our remaining divisions, as revealed in our inability to share one Eucharist. But we were constantly reminded that what unites us is stronger than what divides us. Christian remembering is not centred on our divided memory but rather on the saving events of the birth, life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. For this reason, to remember together as Christians is an essential part of turning to God, so that we may rejoice in



PHOTO: KERRIE HANDBAYNE

hope. It is as we turn to God and see in the other the face of God that we know and see who we are. This is the heart of a truly ecumenical spirituality.

We sought to allow open space for one another, and to create space for those who are failing to connect with each other in a divided world. In the Assembly, a wide range of concerns and commitments came together, providing an opportunity to realise how the Spirit leads the community of faith far beyond any individual horizon. We experienced the richness of God, and of the various ways we can respond to a world that encompasses peoples of many living faiths. We claim religious freedom as a fundamental human right.

The World Council of Churches began its journey in faith with the determination to stay together. We experienced this same determination in Harare, even when we were aware of the difficulties that we faced. As churches long committed to staying together, we now commit ourselves to being together in a continuing growth towards visible unity—not only in assemblies and ecumenical gatherings but each in every place. It is this being together that all ecumenical work at every level must serve. The mission to which God calls the church in the service of God's reign cannot be separated from the call to be one. In Harare we saw once again the immensity of the mission in which God invites us to share. In this mission we who are reconciled to God through the sacrifice of Christ on the cross are challenged to work for reconciliation and peace with justice among those torn apart by violence and war.



From this 8th Assembly of the World Council of Churches we share with you, our brothers and sisters, a message of hope. The God who has called us together will bring us to the fulfilment of all things in Christ. The jubilee that has begun among us is sent to you, to celebrate the liberation of the entire creation. As we have turned once again to God, we have been able to rejoice in hope. We invite you to share with us the vision that we have been able to express together and that, we pray, will become part of a common life and witness:

We long for the visible oneness of the body of Christ,

Affirming the gifts of all,

Young and old, women and men, lay and ordained.

We expect the healing of human community,

The wholeness of God's entire creation.

We trust in the liberating power of forgiveness,

Transforming enmity into friendship and breaking the spiral of violence.

We are challenged by the vision of a church that will reach out to everyone,

Sharing, caring, proclaiming the good news of God's redemption,

A sign of the kingdom and a servant of the world.

We are challenged by the vision of a church,

The people of God on the way together,

Confronting all divisions of race, gender, age or culture,

Striving to realise justice and peace, upholding the integrity of creation.

We journey together as a people with resurrection faith.

In the midst of exclusion and despair,

We embrace, in joy and hope, the promise of life in all its fullness.

We journey together as a people of prayer.

In the midst of confusion and loss of identity,

We discern signs of God's purpose being fulfilled

And expect the coming of God's reign.

Rejoice in Hope

Address to the WCC Assembly by Kosuke Koyama

Rejoice in hope. How strange this sounds! How are we to 'eat' this message (Jeremiah 15:16)? We live in a world so shattered and broken by violence. The 'whole inhabited world' (*oikumene*) is full of the desperately poor, starving children, people uprooted from their homes, and innocent victims of war and ethnic conflict. The threat of nuclear extinction still hangs like a cloud on our horizon and our planet is in the grip of an ecological crisis. How can we rejoice in hope?

Our everyday perception of joy and hope fails to comprehend the mystery that surrounds this message of hope in which we can rejoice. The mystery is of a compassionate God who embraces the world. The more desperate the world becomes, the more intimate and determined becomes the life-sustaining embrace of God. This is our faith. This is where we stand. 'Rejoice in hope' rings out 'throughout the land to all its inhabitants' from the compassionate God. (See Leviticus 25:10.) We hear God's word: 'Remove the sandals from your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground.' (Exodus 3:5) The whole world is now holy ground. We remove our sandals. Grace is barefoot.

Our thoughts turn to Jesus Christ, who himself was homeless. 'The Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head.' (Luke 9:58, 2:7) God's embrace of the world has become passionate in this

homeless Son of Man. No-one is more homeless than the crucified Jesus. Jesus—crucified—barefoot—the shattered broken Christ—speaks to the shattered, broken world. The cross is the most holy ground before which the very sandals of God are removed. 'O sometimes it causes me to tremble, tremble, tremble. Were you there when they crucified my Lord?' In this evangelical space 'we may be knocked down but we are never knocked out!' (2 Corinthians 4:9, J.B. Phillips) This space is nurtured and maintained by the Spirit of God whose name is Compassion. This is the space in which the Eighth Assembly of the WCC, by the grace of God, finds itself.

The call to 'rejoice in hope' begins with the 'impassioned God' (Exodus 20:5, The Jewish Bible). There is a painful relationship between the world and this God who embraces it. Through the ancient prophet Hosea God says: 'My mind is turning over inside me. My emotions are agitated all together.' (Hosea 11:8, The Anchor Bible) Israel is found to be unfaithful. But God refuses to give her up. The world is unfaithful. But God refuses to give it up. God is caught in a dilemma. God is in distress, a distress sharpened by love. The mystery of our theme, 'rejoice in hope', is hidden in this extraordinary story of God's inner life.

Is hope related to the future? Yes. But even more it is related to love. Hope is not a time-story. It is a love-

story. 'We shall overcome some day' means 'we shall overcome by the power of compassion'. The gospel dares to place love above time. All the healing stories of the gospels, and ultimately the confession of the faith that on 'the third day he rose again from the dead' (the Apostles' Creed) point to this awesome truth. Hope is impassioned by love as is every healing word of Jesus. 'Stand up, take your mat and go to your home' (Mark 2:11). Remember! The one who says this is homeless, and he embodies fully the God who embraces the world. How impassioned the whole situation is! If God is found in sheol ('cold storage') as the Psalmist says, then sheol will melt in the heat of the compassionate God (Psalm 139:8). Was not the Birmingham City Jail made hot by the impassioned hope of Rev. Martin Luther King Jr when he was imprisoned there? What is hope if it is not inspired by love? What is the field of love if it is not the whole inhabited world? Hope is a hot love story.

Is hope about that which is not seen? Yes. 'Hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what is seen?' (Romans 8:24) 'Although you have not seen him, you love him ...' (1 Peter 1:8) But hope is rooted in 'what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked at and touched with our hands' (1 John 1:1). What is love if it remains invisible and intangible? 'Those who do not love a

brother or sister whom they have seen, cannot love God whom they have not seen.' (1 John 4:20) The devastating poverty in which millions of children live is visible. Racism is visible. Machine guns are visible. Slums are visible. Starved bodies are visible. The gap between the rich and the poor is glaringly visible. Our response to these realities must be visible. Grace cannot function in a world of invisibility.

Yet, in our world the rulers try to make invisible 'the alien, the orphan, and the widow' (Jeremiah 7:6. See also Exodus 22:22, Psalm 82:3, Mark 12:40 and James 1:27), and the 'hungry, thirsty, stranger, naked, sick and imprisoned' (Matthew 25:31-46). This is violence. The gospel insists on visibility—the emaciated bodies of starved children must remain visible to the world. There is a connection between invisibility and violence. People, because of the dignity of the image of God they embody, must remain seen. Faith, hope, and love are not vital except in 'what is seen'. The ecumenical movement seeks the visible unity of the churches. Was not God visible in Jesus Christ? (John 1:18, 14:9)? The gospel sees the mystery of salvation in what is seen. Religions seem to raise up the invisible and despise what is visible. But it is the 'hear, see, touch' gospel that can nurture the hope that is free from deception.

The one God embraces the one world that speaks more than 7,000 dialects and languages. God is open to all cultures and nations. 'Blessed be Egypt my people, and Assyria the work of my hands, and Israel my heritage.' (Isaiah 19:25) How many languages does God speak? All of them! No people can speak an isolated language,

and have an exclusive self-identity. All peoples are webbed. The church is in the world, and the world is in the church. God's word to the church is God's word to the world. There are no 'two words' of God, one for the church and another for the world. The one world listens to Christ's words to 'the goats' and to 'the sheep' (Matthew 25:31-46). In the hearing of the one world Jesus exclaimed, 'I watched Satan fall from heaven like a flash of lightning.' (Luke 10:18). When God embraces this one world with compassion, the world becomes 'upside down' (Acts 17:6). What a commotion!

Listen to Jesus' commotion-filled parable: 'But while he was still far off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion; he ran and put his arms around him and kissed him.' (Luke 15:20) A running God! What can we make of the centre God who runs out to the periphery? While we are puzzled, the periphery becomes the centre! The light shines from the periphery, not from the centre. From 'the stone that the builders rejected' comes salvation (Mark 12:10). What an unexpected commotion!

'Quickly, bring out a robe—the best one—and put it on him; put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet ... And get the fatted calf...' Grace causes commotion, not tranquillity. The church is the Body of Christ who runs to welcome the broken world. Our hope, by nature, is not tranquil, it is commotion-ful. The apostolic 'rejoice in hope' is known in this world turned 'upside down' by the running God.

It is the task of theology to paint his grace-impelled commotion—to make it visible. Ministry is to 'bring out

a robe, quickly'. The commotion-event ushered in by the coming of Jesus Christ is the gospel. The commotion is not pain free. The followers of Christ can have different views and convictions about some of the issues that confront us today, even while they participate together in sincere Bible study and devoted worship. With sincerity and devotion we are called to place our views and convictions under the light of the compassionate God who embraces the world. In theology and in ministry, we must become 'barefoot' and 'homeless'.

'Rejoice in hope' says the homeless apostle (Romans 12:12, 1 Corinthians 4:11). He continues: 'Extend hospitality to strangers.' (Romans 12:13) He is in line with the ecumenism of Jeremiah: 'Seek the welfare of the city ... for in its welfare you will find your welfare.' (Jeremiah 29:7) The gospel of the Compassionate Spirit admonishes us to rejoice with the strangers, with the world. The world is not just 'goats'. 'See, I am sending you out like sheep into the midst of wolves'—this is not an absolute, fixed truth (Matthew 10:16). The Spirit of God embraces the world of the 'goats and sheep'. 'The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near.' (Mark 1:15) To rephrase John's gospel: 'God came to what was God's own, and God's own received God joyously!' (See John 1:11.) This is substance of our rejoicing in hope. The rejoicing of a private and exclusive community fails to invite all to hope. That is not the gospel. Hope with all creation, and rejoice with all creation! What a far-reaching horizon! (Psalm 139:7-10)

This horizon is not a hallucination. For God no-one is stranger. Every per-

son—whatever his or her cultural, religious, racial, political identity—is known to God as an irreplaceable and incomparable person. This is the root of God's wholesome ecumenism. But, when our actions say, 'I am not my brother's keeper,' (Genesis 4:9)—the clearest, most understandable expression of sin—we treat God as a stranger. To say, 'I am not my brother's keeper,' is to look on others as pollution. This destroys the foundation for hope for the world. 'Rejoice in hope' is to 'love your neighbour as yourself'. If hope is not experienced now, it may not be experienced in the future. We cannot love our neighbours unless we are open to being loved by our neighbours. We cannot extend hospitality to strangers unless we accept hospitality from strangers. The gospel upholds this two-way traffic. One-way traffic breeds self-righteousness. 'A woman came with an alabaster jar of very costly ointment of nard, and she broke open the jar and poured the ointment on his head.' Deeply impressed by this hospitality—even as it causes a considerable commotion among onlookers—Jesus accepts and commends her. 'Truly I tell you, wherever the good news is proclaimed in the whole world, what she has done will be told in remembrance of her.' (See Mark 14:3–10.)

'Rejoice in hope' is an 'upside down' possibility. It lives today in the commotion caused by grace. The Biblical mystery is not tranquil. It is impassioned. It is about the homeless Jesus who embraces everyone by going to the periphery. Therefore, *cantate domino*, for 'the light shines in the darkness and the darkness has not overcome it' (John 1:5).

Harare: An Asian Perspective

Reflections of Asian Participants

This is not a 'report' on the WCC General Assembly in Harare, but a personal reflection. The Catholic Church, to which I belong, is not a WCC member church, although we have a good working relationship with the council through joint committees and common projects. So I was not an official delegate, but took part as an observer. My presence in Harare was a result of the ongoing cooperation we are building between the Christian Conference of Asia and the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences.

Two memories will always remain with me. The first was 'spiritual' and underlines our unity as disciples of Christ. One evening, we made a 'way of the cross' together, moving around the University of Zimbabwe campus to prearranged locations, meditating and reliving together the final hours of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection. Christians of many different churches, from all continents and nations, all language, ethnic, and racial groups, united in following the footsteps of our Friend and Saviour. My impression was how much more important are those things that make us one than all the peripheral things that seem to divide us.

My second unforgettable memory was 'political'—the address of Nelson Mandela on the second-last day. This great leader of the South African national struggle, now a grey-haired elder statesman, thanked the WCC for the moral and financial support the churches gave to African nationalists during the difficult years when liberation seemed a distant, almost unrealisable dream. The financial help was essential, he said, to keep their struggle alive against all odds, while the encouragement they received was a constant reminder that they were not alone, but that Christians around the world were with them in prayer and action.

These two memories sum up for me the goals of the ecumenical movement: Christians united in the living, dying and risen Christ, and united in action for the total liberation of humankind. I was happy to be part, even as an observer, of an assembly of fellow Christians who for the past years proclaimed and pursued these goals.

Thomas Michel, SJ
(Executive Secretary for Ecumenical Relations,
Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences)

Reflections of Asian Participants

WCC Assembly was a confrontation with Africa—a place where Africans could tell their stories with passion. It was almost overwhelming; a vast collage of experiences! Highlights would have to be the electrifying dramatic presentation of the African plenary, hearing Kosuke Koyama, a Japanese theologian, talking about the God ‘who runs to the periphery’, being addressed by Nelson Mandela, the vibrant worship, and the moving moment when North and South Koreans joined hands and sang together in the Asian Regional meeting. On the downside, it was obvious that there is no clear consensus amongst the member churches about what ‘ecumenism’ means and consequently differences about WCC structures and style continue to be painful. That was familiar ground to me and I suspect for others. Even so, I’m very glad I was there!

*Jan Cormack
(General Secretary of the Council of Churches in
Aotearoa New Zealand)*

The WCC Assembly was unique in many ways. The first Assembly was held in Amsterdam in Europe, but the jubilee Assembly met in Zimbabwe, a so-called third-world country. This clearly indicates a paradigm shift from a Eurocentric WCC of the early years towards the young churches of the South by the new millennium. This Assembly was held in an African milieu with an African liturgical ethos and African theological issues.

Many African issues are Asian issues too—international debt relief, globalisation, HIV/AIDS, human rights violations, culture and gospel and religious persecution. It is to be noted that people from the Asian region conducted very good studies on the theme ‘Turn to God—Rejoice in Hope’.

Asian numbers and involvement were also good. Asian participants guided deliberations well and decisions positively. Their participation in the padare was also

good. Asia is a model for gender proportions in central and executive committees.

I feel we must stand together with others to champion the causes and concerns of Asia. We need more mutual consultation, regional cohesion and combined efforts in bringing Asian issues to the centre of WCC. More Asian personnel must be on the staff of WCC. We need to own and support WCC more financially. National councils and CCA need to maintain a close relationship among themselves and with the WCC. We need to mould and strengthen Asian ecumenical leaders in the changing ecumenical world scenario in the future.

*Bishop Zacharias Mar Theophilus
(Mar Thoma Syrian Church, India)*

I was privileged to be part of the WCC Assembly in Harare, representing the Hong Kong Christian Council. Having the venue in Africa was a clear indication of WCC’s expression of solidarity with suffering people. Only when we turn to our neighbours, can we turn to God and rejoice in hope!

Regardless of many sharp debates and serious controversy on many different issues, especially the future relationship between WCC and the Orthodox churches, there was still a strong intention and demonstration of walking together on the way to unity. As the Chinese saying expresses so genuinely, ‘Real gold can be tested by burning fire.’

Personally, I enjoyed more the lively worship services, the African beats and drums, the genuine Christian fellowship and the freedom to share our dreams and visions. I must say that after attending the General Assembly I am more committed to join hands with all other Christians to stay on together on the ecumenical journey!

*Tso Man King
(General Secretary of the Hong Kong Christian
Council)*

Harare: The Decade Festival

The Beginning of a Long Journey

The Ecumenical Decade of Churches in Solidarity with Women ended formally in Harare. About 1,200 women and a few men (thirty) from all over the world participated in the Decade Festival, which marked the culmination of a series of creative initiatives and activities aimed at encouraging the churches to hear the cry for justice from those who form half the church, and to be in solidarity with them in their struggle for equality and justice.

Meaningful worship services, speeches with searing analyses of social and ecclesiastical structures, theological reflections, sharing of stories, involved discussions and displays of

talents made the festival an occasion to celebrate hope in solidarity despite the fact that the churches have not done anything significant to show that they care for justice within. Therefore the Decade has unfortunately remained and continued to be known as the Women's Decade, with many seeing the issue of injustice towards women only as a women's issue.

Women expressed themselves by revealing their secret pain of isolation, economic injustice, barriers to participation, racism, religious fundamentalism, ethnic genocide, sexual harassment and HIV/AIDS. But violence against women was one issue that provoked the feelings of everyone

present. With the solidarity that emerged through their shared experience of violence, they comforted and encouraged one another by saying, 'Your story is my story, your story is our story. Because of these tears we stay together and move and claim that violence against women is a sin.' Unfortunately, the churches are yet to enter into their predicament.

However, the festival did have glimpses of a new church. Women brought water from all over the world, symbolising the flow of the movement, affirming their determination to pursue the struggle until 'the fountain of all life, where the sustaining and refreshing water flows unceasingly,

opening new paths, cleansing, healing, connecting, nourishing the roots of our dreams ... never running dry'. A Decade-less future confronts us. Do we heave a sigh of relief and begin to sideline the need to sustain the church on its journey towards health and wholeness or join with our sisters, with renewed commitment and enthusiasm, in their search for a new church of the future, one that is just, sensitive and, most of all, credible?

*Deenabandhu Manchala
(India)*



A Time of Tears

Tears at the opening as streams of women from all around the world came forward to pour water, symbolising the Water of Life, into a communal pot. The huge African pot overflowed and we all recognised that the festival was happening and was blessed.

Tears in plenary as women told of their pain and anguish at sexual abuse and discrimination they had suffered within the church.

Tears around the table-groups as women suddenly unburdened them-

selves to those they had come to trust, and found themselves supported.

A Time of Fun

Hoots and applause as local young people welcomed us with vibrant, colourful dance and drama. Laughter and spontaneous singing in the cool morning air as we gathered to wait in long queues for breakfast.

A Time of Creativity

African crafts, American quilts, 'The Spirituality of Struggle' by Asian Chris-

tian artists, the creation by us all of a handprint artwork bearing the message, 'I have made a handprint, a sacred one, for I am Imago Dei, an image bearer of the Divine.'

A Time of Listening

Listening to issues of concern from individuals and groups, and faithful reporting of differing viewpoints in preparing a letter to be taken on to the Assembly. Women celebrated, held together and moved on together.

Louise Scott (Hong Kong)

To Be a Woman Is To Be a Troublemaker

The end of the Decade marks the dialectical way of God's presence in the history of human beings. It is the way shown through the tears and laughter of women, through the water and the wind, through the blood and the bodies of violated women, through song and dance, a story of hope and despair, of past and future. The end of the Decade marks the unfinished agenda of churches in solidarity with women as well as women in solidarity with churches. It is about the struggle of women and churches, hand in hand struggling for justice in every level of church and society and for all human beings. The agenda of the Decade should be unfinished, in order to keep the dynamic of the Decade alive. 'To keep' here means to maintain the commitment to work in inclusive community for women and men in church and in society.

Let us move from solidarity to accountability! I can still remember the voices, the 'typical' African scream, and the sound of hand clapping filling the gymnasium hall of Belvedere Teacher Training School, as Musimbi Kanyoro gave her amazing words at the opening worship of the Decade Festival: 'From solidarity to accountability.' It is a challenge, yet a hope from the women gathered in Harare to mark their contribution, throughout and after the Decade, in the life and struggle of the church and of the world. It echoes a spirituality of not giving up, a mature spirituality, the spirituality of women whose lives marked the sign of violence, the sign of struggle of life and the wounds of the struggle for survival. Such spirituality reminds me of Hagar, whose story was one of the Bible study materials at the festival. My encounter with Hagar, through reading her story in Genesis 16:1-16,

21:9-21 compassionately, has enabled me to identify her as a slave, a foreigner, a woman. These three identities are the indicators of Hagar's oppression and subordination. Yet Hagar shows her spirituality of not giving up, which liberates her to resist the violence in order for her and her son to survive.

Identification through story is a way of being in an inclusive community. I did it with Hagar's story by claiming Hagar's story as my story. It reminds me of the 'ritual' of the women and men in the hall at the Belvedere school. 'Your story is my story ... your story is our story,' said every time a woman ended her story of being oppressed and violated against. They told us the story of violence against women, which exists in the church yet the church ignores it, even justifying it. But the story of violence against women was not the end. It was followed by

other, encouraging stories of some women, followed by visionary statements as challenges to the church. It seems that we try to make an antithesis of women's suffering on one side and women's power to survive on the other side in order to show that, though women are vulnerable to be victimised, they are yet powerful enough to survive and to exercise their own power.

'Your story is my story . . . your story is our story,' reflects the essence of (Asian) women's efforts of weaving new patterns in doing theology. They start from the very being of human encounters with God, that is from human experience. Here experience, which is women's experience as women in encountering God, is the starting point of doing theology as 'God-praxis'. Women's experience as the starting point was shown explicitly at one of the worship times when nine women, from different backgrounds, brought nine different vessels, carried in different ways, showing the different experiences of women in encountering God. The ways of carrying the vessels also reflected different interpretations about the power of water, the main symbol used in the festival, being experienced in the life of women in different social-cultural

contexts. The differences however enriched the gathering, as each of them poured their water into a big bowl, and met each other around it, representing the solidarity of women in the struggle for survival. As each of them poured her water, she said: 'I bring the tears of . . . women of . . . ' The water, then, was identified with the tears of women around the world—the tears of women being violated against, the tears of the victims of domestic violence, the tears of the oppressed, the tears of the mothers, daughters and wives. And yet the living water heals the women—the living water becomes healing water (see John 4:1-42).

The story of a woman then can also be defined as the story of water. It is a story of humbleness, as water always takes the lowest place. It is a story of being contextual, as water always takes the form of and fits the place where it is. It is a life-giving story, as water gives life. It is the story of the power of resistance and survival, as water helps human beings to survive thirst, dryness and fire. It is the story of inclusiveness, as water crosses all human barriers of exclusiveness to fulfil the needs of all. It is the story of the mystery of life, as water flows, has no end and can not be defined substantially, as it is, but just through its place.

As an Indonesian Christian woman, living in the midst of the uncertainty facing my people recently as a result of the political and economic crises, the story of woman as the story of water should be looked at also as the story of blood. The blood represents the story of Indonesian women of Chinese descent who were raped, sexually harassed and sadistically killed in Jakarta in May 1998. The blood represents the story of the women in Irian Jaya, Aceh and East Timor, whose rights as human beings are violated against. The blood also symbolises the inclusiveness and humbleness of God in solidarity with the victims and the poor in my country. Such identification has encouraged me to keep the dynamic and the spirit of the Decade into this post-Decade time and the third millennium. In order to keep it then, I look back on my table number, 100, in the gymnasium hall. I see myself conversing with women from Africa, North America and Europe, trying to answer the question, 'What are we going to give account and to whom should we give accountability?' What does it mean to be a woman in the time of post Decade? What does it mean to be a woman in Indonesia?

'To be a woman is to be a troublemaker.' This was both an answer and a challenge from Musimbi Kanyoro in her opening remarks. I have taken it as a challenge and have tried to identify the meaning of being a troublemaker in Indonesia. To me, to be a troublemaker is to be the one who works for accountability. A troublemaker is one whose spirituality is one of not giving up, which liberates her and others. A troublemaker is one who, with justice, righteousness, love



and kindness, walks humbly with God (Micah 8:8). A troublemaker is a storyteller. A storyteller has to root her story in the story of the most victimised ones in her own context in order for her to give account to them, to the church, to society and to the Lord. But why a storyteller? Because a storyteller herself is a subject. As a subject she can be transformed and can transform others by the story she tells, because 'once a story is told it will have its own life and its own power and it will have an influence in the future lives'.

A storyteller can be a silence breaker in order to break the culture of silence which is part of the victimisation of women. In the post Decade, the culture of silence must be broken. Victimised women should tell their stories of violence against them. They should unveil the hidden part of the story for the next generation so an inclusive and responsible community in church and society can take part. A story can only have its own life and power and influence if it is told. It reminds me of a documentary film by Helke Sander, *Befreier und Befreite*, about women who tell their stories of being raped and sexually abused during the war. In telling their stories the victims experience the liberating process of opening their secrets, knowing their stories are heard. In the film the 'liberators take liberties'. It is about the end of the culture of silence. Hopefully the end of the Decade means the end of the culture of silence, though there is still the continuation of the struggle of women and men, in partnership with God, to bring forward justice and reconciliation in the life of church and society.

Septemmy Lakawa

Not Just a Youth Gathering

Pre-Assembly Youth Event

Learning and sharing are always two very useful ways to communicate with other people that come from different cultures and religious backgrounds. It was my responsibility to learn, to share and to exchange experiences of youth mission I am involved in as a female, lay and youth delegate from Taiwan participating in the WCC Assembly in Harare, Zimbabwe.

The WCC Youth Team organised the PAYE (Pre-Assembly Youth Event) during 28 November to 2 December 1998. The purpose of this program was to offer an essential and valuable space for youth delegates, stewards, advisors and visitors of the Assembly who care about youth mission in churches. PAYE was not just a simple youth gathering:

it enabled young people to get together to share about the youth work of their own churches and it was a gathering to formulate a common youth mission for the next millennium. Each day had a particular topic, introduced at the morning worship. For example one day we mourned for those who had died of AIDS, a serious problem in the African continent. Advisors encouraged participants to think about what kind of actions we could do to break the chains binding people and to fit with the theme of 'Turn to God—Rejoice in Hope'.

Two days were spent preparing youth delegates who had the right to vote in the Council assembly plenary. This was very useful to better understand the concepts of the assembly.

At the end of the PAYE, a youth policy document was produced. This document described the struggle youth have had for the past fifty years to be





heard. It emphasised that the WCC, other ecumenical organisations and member churches should be more open so the voice of youth can be heard and to let young people have more chances to witness and to show God's amazing works by youth mission. The youth hoped that the WCC at least should have a goal of 20 per cent youth participation in assemblies, committees and meetings.

The spirit of PAYE overflowed into the plenary session and youth caucuses never stopped being heard during the Assembly. Youth gained only 14.7 per cent of the seats in the new central committee so the fight will continue to enable more young people to get involved in church and youth mission.

One church leader said that the future of the church depends on young men and women, a meaningless statement if the church continues to silence the voice of youth. The next millennium is in the hands of the youth, not in the hierarchy of the church.

PAYE may have ended a day before the General Assembly, but it has not ended in the hearts of the youth delegates. It was a gathering that enabled delegates to walk together into the fu-

ture with each other. It offered a space to collect beautiful visions to be sent to each member church. Although there is a long way to go, it brought hope to young people.

Yueh-Wen Lu

A Youth's Memory of Harare

Being together as youth delegates at the WCC Assembly and participants of PAYE is a memory I would like to share. It was a very powerful ecumenical experience that affected me and—I believe—each of the participants, who had various backgrounds in culture, in education, in society, in family and in religious and theological views. It was also a very wonderful time as we shared many things—culture, songs, and the warm hospitality of Zimbabwean brothers and sisters. Such experiences gave everyone of us a widened perspective about what Christianity is and the essential meaning of being a follower of Jesus. The theme of PAYE, 'From Generation to Generation', was a great challenge to many of us. This theme was drawn from 2 Timothy 1:4–5,

which describes the importance of intergenerational relations and reaffirms the process of faith transmission.

We also approached this theme in relation to that of the Assembly, 'Turn to God—Rejoice in Hope'. We dealt with the power, something that can change and create, with reconciliation, something that can bring us to an equal power, and with memory, something that can keep us together and bring us to reconciliation.

There was also a deep concern on a common understanding and vision of WCC, a task of everybody, especially young people, to make alive and relevant, building the wholeness of the church as one body of Christ.

I recognised that there are a lot of barriers and walls dividing us in this suffering world, even within the church, and we need to break them down. We should be concerned for those who are in hard times, in the middle of battlefields struggling for justice, peace and the integrity of creation, as in many places of the world, including my country, Indonesia. We not only need to work together with people from different denominations, but also with those from other faiths, particularly Muslims. This can be worked out through interfaith dialogue within the paradigm of working ecumenically and the vision of an inclusive church.

The contribution of young people as the church of today was also demanded. Churches and structures should involve more young people. There was some progress in terms of numbers, but I found it is still not enough. I am deeply concerned about this, and I think we need to renew the vision for work with, and integrating

young people in the ecumenical movement, and to continue the leadership development of them. This is not just important for the sake of the future of the church or WCC or other ecumenical bodies, but, more than that, for bringing God's will and his kingdom on the earth of a new humanity into reality.

I heard and saw, experienced, learned and discovered many things and issues. I was also glad to have had special moments of sharing and discussion with Asian youth. We were confronted with our own issues and this motivated us to find solutions that can overcome the problems of our region. As young people from Asia, I think that these should be considered and developed more in our own local context, church and society. Asian people deal with many issues: globalisation, a global economic crisis causing poverty and unemployment, the oppression of neocolonial economic structures, national debts, the violation of human rights, state violence against people (particularly students struggling for democracy and women), religious persecution, racial discrimination, AIDS, and the degradation of the environment. For me it's not just about Christian people standing in solidarity on these issues, but the more important thing is to give support and to take action.

Harare gave me a new spirit, inspiration and encouragement to work more and more in the field of God, hand in hand with all my brothers and sisters in faith. And it is now time to share and maintain this spirit in our work and in our own situation, with prayer and a strong commitment.

Astri Imelda Rosalin

CCA Youth Padare Globalisation and Youth in Asia

The CCA Youth Padare* was an effort to unveil the truth about globalisation from the perspective of youth in Asia. It was organised in such a way that youth could share the grim realities brought about by the implementation of globalisation in their respective countries. More importantly, it was a way to find meaning and hope in the midst of the uncertainties and misery ushered in by globalisation.

Three major inputs were shared. The first was from Kim Hye Ran from Korea, who spoke of the impact of the structural adjustment program of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) on youth and women in the midst of the current economic crisis in her country.

Secondly Lei Garcia from the Philippines clearly defined globalisation as a rapid integration of national economies into a single global market whose trajectory is a borderless economy, which means a reduction, if not elimi-

nation, of trade barriers all over the world. Finally, Sudipta Singh from India showed a video on globalisation produced by NCC India. This brief video revealed the problems that Indian people face daily. It showed the stages of globalisation, how globalisation came to India and its impact on Indian society.

The participants of the padare renewed their commitment to continue their work to expose and oppose the effects of globalisation in the lives of God's people and the whole creation.

Lei Garcia

* Padare is the meeting place for common deliberation in the Shona tradition of Zimbabwe. It broadened opportunities for participation beyond the scope of any previous WCC assembly. The padare was a unique space in which to experience, nurture and celebrate the fellowship among Christians that has developed in and grown with the ecumenical movement.



New Anglican Province in Hong Kong

On 25 October 1998 Hong Kong Sheng Kung Hui was inaugurated as a new province in the Anglican Communion. The former Anglican Diocese of Hong Kong and Macau has a history dating back over 150 years. With the establishment of the new ecclesiastical entity the new province now comprises three dioceses—Hong Kong Island, eastern Kowloon, and Western Kowloon—and the Missionary Area of Macau. There are 28,000 members in forty parishes and mission points, and the church has a strong record in mission, education and social services. The message below was delivered at the inauguration, which was presided over by the Archbishop of Canterbury.

Message from the Most Reverend Peter Kwong Kong-kit, Archbishop of the Province of Hong Kong Sheng Kung Hui

The Hong Kong Province of Sheng Kung Hui is formally inaugurated today. The Anglican Diocese of Hong Kong and Macau, on which foundation the province is founded, has, over its 150 years of history, played a significant part in helping to build today's Hong Kong,

through missionary work, through education and through social services.

Much as Hong Kong has suffered from unprecedented financial turmoil, economic depression and an unemployment rate on the rise, the confidence of the people of Hong Kong has remained steadfast, for this is our home. The province is based on the solid foundation that was established by Anglican efforts during the past century and a half. We are firm in our re-

solve that, with our fellow citizens, we will continue to face the vicissitudes and the happiness that lie ahead, supporting each other in a caring, trusting manner. The Hong Kong Province of Sheng Kung Hui is a church that belongs to the people of Hong Kong. We shall plant the seeds of charity, faith, hope and joy in this place and, as amply explained in our mission statement, we shall seek to fulfil our pledge of serving the people of Hong Kong.

Further to this, we have recently established a World Relief Fund. Through this fund we hope to be able to offer timely assistance to people afflicted with disasters, in Hong Kong and elsewhere in the world.

We believe that the establishment of the Hong Kong Sheng Kung Hui Province will create more opportunities for us to serve the people of Hong Kong. We sincerely hope that our fellow citizens will continue to lend us their support, as they have done for so many years, so that our services may bring greater love and care to the community, and contribute to the rich wholeness of life in Hong Kong.

May the love of God be with us all in Hong Kong.



The Archbishop of Canterbury presents the Primatial Cross to the Primate of Hong Kong Sheng Kung Hui, Archbishop Peter Kwong Kong-kit

FABC-OSC Bishops' Meet '98

The growing relationship between the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences (FABC) of the Catholic church and the Christian Conference of Asia was further strengthened when, for the first time, the FABC Office of Social Communication invited a representative of CCA to its annual Bishops' Meet. Geoff Alves, *CCA News* editor, attended. The meeting was held in Taoyuan, Taiwan, in November 1998 and took as its theme the social communication perspectives and challenges of the Synod of Bishops Special Assembly for Asia held earlier in the year at the Vatican.

The synod was seen as a special hour of grace to the church in Asia. It made the church aware again of special concerns and obligations such as interreligious dialogue, the communion of communities, inculturation,

spirituality, a new way of being church and human promotion. The synod fathers in their final message said, 'The media is rightly called the modern ar-eopagus, and it is here, as in other fields, that the church can play a prophetic role and, wherever necessary, become the voice of the voiceless.' It was in this spirit that the participants in Taiwan conducted their discussions.

First, they felt that, with the many challenges being faced today, the spirituality of those involved in social communication must be reemphasised. Such a spirituality 'flows out of the communication of the Holy Trinity'. Jesus Christ was seen as the 'perfect communicator', the model for all Christian communication.

Any spirituality of communication is first and foremost expressed through the witness of life, which means the

communicator in Asia needs to be a person of contemplation and prayer and have the ability to build communities through love, sharing, communion, relationship and equality. The content of one's communication should reflect one's spirituality, the proclamation of Kingdom values amidst a society of violence, corruption and evil forces.

In realising the 'new way of being church in Asia' emphasised at the Asian synod the meeting felt that greater collaboration and assistance has to be initiated among all Christians, and with peoples of other religions and cultures. It recommended the implementation of suitable programs on media education and of traditional and indigenous media in order to help people to be more responsible, that is, to be appreciative, critical and discriminating users of the means of social communication within their own culture.

The meeting also had concern for professionals in communication areas. It was felt that pastors should accept and recognise professionals in communication and develop and promote dialogue and collaboration with them.

Geoff Alves



The Bishops Meet was front page news in the local Catholic weekly

Leadership Development Training in Cambodia

The situation of the church in Cambodia is different to any other country in Asia. The lack of theologically trained personnel to lead the newly formed congregations in Cambodia means there is a leadership vacuum in the churches. Most congregations in Cambodia, especially in rural areas, do not have pastors or their own church buildings—worship is conducted in homes. Most pastors are poor farmers or government employees who receive only a meagre salary from the government. Very few have studied in a Bible schools. 'In a situation where churches are led by, mostly, lay people who have no theological training, KCC has decided to focus on leadership development,' says Rev. Pen Sorithy, Vice President of KCC, a Presbyterian pastor.

So the Council of Churches in Malaysia and the Myanmar Council of Churches joined with CCA in helping KCC organise its first leadership devel-

opment training in November 1998, and eighty-five pastors and church workers from different parts of Cambodia attended. Dr Ana May Say Pa, Principal of the Myanmar Institute of Theology and Rev. Dr Herman Sastri, General Secretary of the Council of Churches in Malaysia, were the main resource persons.

This leadership development program was the first of a series of training programs KCC plans to hold in the coming months to provide theological insights and leadership formation for Cambodian church leaders.

The formation of the Kampuchea Christian Council (KCC) was a breakthrough in Cambodian church history but a multiplicity of denominations and Christian groups formed by foreign missionaries creates confusion in the minds of new believers.

'Although some fundamentalist groups led by overseas missionaries have started creating false propaganda

against KCC ever since Cambodian church leaders decided to start an ecumenical forum as a visible expression of Cambodian church unity, we are still united and we will pray and work together for Christian unity and the well-being of the people of our poor country,' says the General Secretary of KCC, Rev. Say Bun Thon, a pastor and teacher at the Phnom Penh Bible School.

The Christian Conference of Asia and several of the member churches and NCCs from other Asian countries have welcomed the formation of KCC and conveyed encouragement and appreciation to the Cambodian church leaders who have taken this ecumenical initiative. The CCA General Committee in November 1998 officially decided to accept KCC as a full member of CCA at the next General Assembly in 2000. The members of the General Committee expressed the hope that the newborn 'ecumenical baby' in Cambodia will grow in real ecumenical spirit through its association with ecumenical bodies in Asian countries.

The KCC has also taken the initiative to engage in social service activities. Recently it helped people in drought-affected areas in Kompong Cham and Kompong Spieu provinces.

The Minister of Religious Affairs in Cambodia through a government order has informed the Kampuchea Christian Council that KCC has been officially recognised by the Government of the Royal Kingdom of Cambodia.

Mathews George Chunakara



Participants of the Leadership Development Training Program in Cambodia

Asia Sunday 1999

It is time for us again to draw the attention of our member churches and councils and related ecumenical and other organisations to the celebration of Asia Sunday. Asia Sunday this year, which is celebrated on the Sunday before Pentecost Sunday, falls on 16 May 1999. As in the past, if this date is not convenient for your church calendar we urge you to celebrate it on another date that is appropriate.

Started as a day to commemorate the founding of the Christian Conference of Asia (formerly known as the East Asia Christian Conference) on 14 May 1959, Asia Sunday has, through the years, developed into a celebration of ecumenical action and commitment around a theme or a concern that is a current focus of ecumenical life. In collaboration with the Myanmar Council of Churches (MCC) and the churches of Myanmar, the theme for this year's celebration is 'Myanmar: Lord, Heal Us!'

The situation of the church and society in Myanmar is known to all of us. Visiting Myanmar in recent times is like being caught in a time warp. Located in one of the hubs of one of the most dynamically changing parts of the world, Myanmar seems to have stood still, left behind as it were by the winds of change that have been raging around it. In beginning to move again and to reconnect itself to its volatile environment it is experiencing some of the most difficult and painful conditions of economic, social, political and religious life.

The liturgy that has been prepared asks us to pray very specially for the people and churches of Myanmar, to share their burden, and to join in their hope that the Lord whose

ministry it is to make people 'stand up' shall extend his healing hand on the wounds and the frailties that ail Myanmar and its people. We hope for your participation in this celebration, and in helping to bring healing to a land and a people who are in great suffering and pain.

Feliciano V. Cariño
General Secretary, CCA

The Myanmar Situation

The people of Myanmar, regardless of politics, ethnicity or religion, have suffered from more than thirty years of internal warfare and military oppression. After decades under a brutal military regime, a widespread movement for democracy culminated in the massacre of thousands of demonstrators throughout the country in 1988. The military dictatorship bowed to intense pressure and held elections in 1990. The National League for Democracy party won over 80 per cent of the votes, and the military responded by ignoring the results of the elections and jailing many. Earlier, in 1989, the leader of the NLD, Aung San Suu Kyi, was placed under house arrest for six years, during which time she was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize.

Elected members of parliament and other pro-democracy people were forced to flee, and many of those who stayed were arrested and tortured, or killed. Since that time, in an effort to stay in power, the military dictatorship has continued systematic repression against the people of Myanmar, including random arrests, extra-judicial killings, rape, forced labour and military service, torture and ongoing campaigns against the ethnic minorities and pro-democracy

groups. Surveillance by the military intelligence is pervasive. Meanwhile, most of the world's heroin comes out of Myanmar, with the complicity of the dictatorship, which spends over 50 per cent of the national budget on arms, while the people slide deeper into poverty. What was one of the richest countries in Asia is now one of the poorest in the world—and has one of the worst human rights records of the twentieth century. Universities have been closed. Medical schools were reopened only in January this year. The military government changed the name of Burma to Myanmar in 1989.

Churches in Myanmar

The church began in Burma in the 1500s, with further growth in the 1800s, and is still growing. Some estimates place the percentage of Christians at over 7 per cent of the total population of about 47 million, mostly concentrated among the ethnic minorities, many of whom have been struggling for some form of autonomy and freedom for decades. As part of their divide-and-conquer strategy, the dictatorship uses religious differences to stir up internal divisions and hatred. The Myanmar Council of Churches is the ecumenical umbrella of the churches in Myanmar. It was established in 1914 as the India, Ceylon and Burma Christian Council. After independence in 1949, it became the Burma Christian Council, including associated groups such as the YMCA. In 1974 the Burma Christian Council was renamed the Burma Council of Churches. Today, the Myanmar (Burma) Council of Churches has thirteen member churches of different denominations and nine cooperating bodies.

Jesus and Healing

Jesus, by his words and deeds, denied the prevailing beliefs of the society that sickness and suffering were divine punishments.

Jesus' mission was to 'save'. It implied healing to make people whole. Therefore, healing stories are stories about healing, wholeness, peace and harmony. The acts of healing by Jesus are in fact manifestations of the liberation, which is part of Jesus' mission mandate, the proclamation of the Year of the Lord's favour!

In this sense, the 'miracle faith' in Jesus is a kind of protest on the part of Jesus against bodily and political suffering.

This motivates the people to have courage to resist all kinds of 'life-threatening or destroying' powers of the society in which they are placed.

The 'powerful' always expect the 'powerless' to remain paralysed on a bed, but Jesus' mission is to make people stand 'upright'. It is, as the Hebrew word *sbelem* implies, physical-emotional-spiritual wholeness, which includes one's bodily health and wellbeing.

Jesus' acts of healings were always the cause of communal celebration. People always rejoiced at the outcome of the healings since those who experienced healing were always baptised with new possibilities!

The prayer, 'Jesus, heal us!', while on the one hand an expression of the solidarity of a community, is on the other hand a call for a radical transformation and a call for empowerment of one's society to be a liberated community!

Practical Suggestions

This liturgy is jointly prepared by the Myanmar Council of Churches (MCC) and the Christian Conference of Asia (CCA). The theme and scripture readings, as well as some of the litanies and stories, have been prayerfully selected by friends at MCC.

Presentation of the Liturgy

If you feel the need to revise the liturgy to fit your own situation, we encourage you to do so. However, we do hope that you will retain the theme, base your meditation on the proposed scripture readings and other given insights, use the prayers and litanies and sing the suggested hymns. We are aware that many congregations are in the midst of learning the Asian songs. Probably choir members could be asked to lead the congregation in learning the songs prior to the worship service. Another possibility is to select some of the hymns suggested and also use other hymns that are known to your congregations.

It may be helpful to form a small group to assist in preparing, adapting, translating and making the liturgy familiar to the congregation.

Water as a Symbol

For many Asians, water is a symbol for purification, cleansing, refreshment and healing. In front of many homes in different places in Asia we can find jars of water for the passers by to be refreshed by the splashing of water on their heads, to wash their feet and to quench their thirst on the journey. To symbolise our longing for the healing water that springs from the fountain of God's love, we can bring water in a jar and a basin can be put out in front. While singing or reading the words of our hymn 'O Healing River', it would be a good idea for the worship leader to pour the water from the jar to the basin to give the sense of the healing water flowing into our midst. The congregation can then be invited to come to the front and make a symbolic action with the water in whatever way they choose, for example they could dip their hands in the water, take some water and make the sign of the cross, put some water on their head etc. We truly feel that by all of us doing this

action during this worship, the meaning of the healing water flowing over our land of Asia can be experienced.

Offerings

We suggest that offerings collected on Asia Sunday 1999 be allocated to support the work among the Burmese refugees along the Thai-Burma border. Offerings can sent directly to:

The Associate General Secretary
for Finance
Christian Conference of Asia
96, 2nd District, Pak Tin Village
Mei Tin Road, Sha Tin, NT
Hong Kong
via a cheque payable to
'Christian Conference of Asia Ltd'
or via Account Number 295-259766-001
(Hong Kong dollars
plus all other currencies)
or 295-9-916715 (United States dollars)
Hang Seng Bank, Hankow Road Branch
4 Hankow Road, Kowloon
Hong Kong

Acknowledgments

Information on Myanmar:
Christians Concerned for Burma
Voice of refugees: BBC Update
Suggestion for prayers, litanies:
MCC friends
Editorial staff team at CCA:
Glynthea Finger, Daniel
Thiagarajah, Henriette Hutabarat
Hymns from *Sound the Bamboo*,
CCA Hymnal, 1990,
except 'O Healing River', from
Worshipping Ecumenically (WCC)
Edited by Per Harling
Scripture readings from the
New Revised Standard Version

Asia Sunday 1999

Order of Worship

Acts of Gathering

Leader: As we gather for worship let us spend time in silence reflecting on the love of God.

(Music may be played softly)

Call to Worship

Leader: Let us listen to the voices of the people of Myanmar as they share their stories.

(The following stories may be read silently, or read out by various members of the congregation or the leader)

Voice of Youth

During 1996 many young people came to Yangon to attend a seminar with the theme 'Protect God's Creation'. As part of this program we visited remote areas of Myanmar where villagers have been 'resettled' as part of a development scheme.

These villagers had to leave their fields and possessions and go to another area. Here they faced many difficulties. No clean drinking water and no health clinics for when there is sickness. Because of government regulations, to avoid starvation they had to steal from their own harvests. The people were unable to make their nourishing meals of curry. Salt was also unavailable. Gradually,

the people become dehydrated and the number of deaths soared. When they died, there was not sufficient room for them to be buried so that they could rest in peace.

When we young people witnessed what was happening to these villagers, we sighed very deeply as we felt so helpless.

Voice of a Student

My name is Phu Phu, a third-year chemistry major. Ever since I was in high school I have been dreaming of becoming a scientist. I am presently waiting to attend final-year classes.

I had always hoped to be a graduate in my early twenties, but now my dreams have just simply become dreams of yesterday. Universities are closed and consequently so are my dreams of a bright future. I yearn for the day the schools will reopen.

My parents are government workers and while I intend to work abroad, they cannot afford the costs that are involved in this process. Like most of my friends I long to learn computer skills, attend English-speaking class and join LCCI, etc. But I know I don't stand a chance because of our financial difficulties. My parents often urge me to work in a private firm but I know the price that I will have to pay to do that. I just hope and pray that the universities will be reopened.

Myanmar: Lord, Heal Us!

Asia Sunday 1999

Voice of a Mother

I am a mother of six children. My husband used to work for a religious organisation. My third child, a baby girl, was crippled with polio at the age of two years.

My husband died of liver cancer when my youngest son was five years old. I had to carry on alone with six children not yet come of age. The struggle to clothe, feed and give them an education is a heavy burden for me. I have to face the bitter side of life and experience the pain of helplessness.

There is some relief as the church gave me a helping hand by enabling me to open a small shop in front of the hospital. I sell betel, cigars and some handy home-use medicines. My 18-year-old daughter was able to help earn some family income and for over a year we were able to survive. However, one day she was killed in a bus crash near the Chin State and Indian border area. When I first heard this, I couldn't believe my ears. It struck me like a lightning bolt and I thought I would lose my sanity. I cried out loud to God in my agony, 'What have I done wrong to be in this unbearable position?' And then after two years my eldest son was bedridden with malaria. We tried to help him recover but in the end he died. No longer able to bear all this stress, I tried many times to commit suicide, but did not succeed.

The turning point in my life was after I read a passage from Isaiah 61:1–3. These verses spoke to my heart and inspired me. Now in the shade of God's love, providence and care I dare to face life not only for my four remaining children but also for my community.

Voice of Refugees

The first major influx of Karen refugees began fifteen years ago and the Burmese Border Consortium (BBC) was set up in March of that year. Fifteen years, and still no end in sight!

Our map of the refugee populations at the end of the year shows a total caseload of 111,813. The number changed very little during the second half of 1998, giving once again a false impression of stability. The BBC is also

feeding up to 8,000 refugees outside or not recorded in the camps and, as the year starts, hundreds of new refugees are crossing the border with the prospect of many more to come.

Leader: We have listened to these voices of life in Myanmar. We gather them to our hearts and in prayer say together, 'Lord, Heal Us!'

(Silence)

Leader: I will extol you, O Lord, for you have drawn me up

People: And did not let my foes rejoice over me.

Leader: O Lord my God, I cried to you for help

People: And you have healed me.

Leader: O Lord, you brought up my soul from Sheol,

People: Restored me to life from among those gone down to the Pit.

Leader: Sing praises to the Lord, O you, his faithful ones.

People: And give thanks to his holy name.

Leader: For his anger is but for a moment,

People: His favour is for a lifetime.

Leader: Weeping may linger for the night,

People: But joy comes with the morning.

All: Praise the Lord! Lord, heal us!

(Psalm 30:1–5)

Hymn of Praise

'Come, O Come, Let Us Praise'

(Sound the Bamboo No. 1)

Prayer of Confession

Leader: Eternal God, hallowed be your name.

Your kingdom come on earth as it is in heaven.

People: Your name is great and to be praised.

In you is our trust established.

Leader: Loving God, we come to your presence with fear and humility.

We know your love for us is never-ending, strong and compassionate.

People: Our hearts lift in praise as we acknowledge your presence with us.

Myanmar: Lord, Heal Us!

Leader: God, tender shepherd of the flock, we confess that we can be like sheep led astray. Lead us beside your healing waters that we may find rest from loads that are too heavy; that we may find peace in the midst of the turmoil and stresses of our days. Encourage us when we feel overburdened by the struggle for daily survival.

People: O Lord, have mercy on us. Anoint our heads with oil. Comfort us with your compassion.

Leader: God, forgiver of our sins, through your son's ministry and death on the cross you showed us how to love and forgive our enemies. Teach us to love and forgive, and lead us in paths of righteousness so that your kingdom will come with its message of reconciliation for all.

People: O Lord, have mercy on us. Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us.

All: May we be open to the guidance of your Spirit as we live in our world. May we be able to discern what is truth in the midst of the chaos and pain, and follow its path of peace and harmony. Amen

Hymn of Reconciliation

'Son of God Whose Heart Is Peace'

(*Sound the Bamboo* No. 60)

Acts of Listening

Scripture Readings

Jeremiah 30:17–22

For I will restore health to you, and your wounds I will heal, says the LORD, because they have called you an outcast: 'It is Zion; no one cares for her!' Thus says the LORD: I am going to restore the fortunes of the tents of Jacob, and have compassion on his dwellings; the city shall be rebuilt upon its mound, and the citadel set on its rightful site. Out of them shall come thanksgiving, and the sound of merrymakers. I will make them many, and they shall not be few; I will make them honoured, and they shall not be disdained. Their children shall be as of old, their congregation shall be established before me; and I will punish all who oppress them. Their prince shall be one of their own, their ruler shall come from their midst; I will bring him near, and he shall approach me, for who would otherwise dare to ap-

proach me? Says the LORD. And you shall be my people, and I will be your God.

Revelation 22:1–5

Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb through the middle of the street of the city. On either side of the river is the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, producing its fruit each month; and the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations. Nothing accursed will be found there any more. But the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and his servants will worship him; they will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. And there will be no more night; they need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light, and they will reign forever and ever.

Mark 2:1–12

When he returned to Capernaum after some days, it was reported that he was at home. So many gathered around that there was no longer room for them, not even in front of the door; and he was speaking the word to them. Then some people came, bringing to him a paralysed man, carried by four of them. And when they could not bring him to Jesus because of the crowd, they removed the roof above him; and after having dug through it, they let down the mat on which the paralytic lay. When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, 'Son, your sins are forgiven.' Now some of the scribes were sitting there, questioning in their hearts, 'Why does this fellow speak in this way? It is blasphemy! Who can forgive sins but God alone?' At once Jesus perceived in his spirit that they were discussing these questions among themselves; and he said to them, 'Why do you raise such questions in your hearts? Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, "Your sins are forgiven," or to say, "Stand up and take your mat and walk"? But so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins'—he said to the paralytic—'I say to you, stand up, take your mat and go to your home.' And he stood up, and immediately took the mat and went out before all of them; so that they were all amazed and glorified God, saying, 'We have never seen anything like this!'

Hymn of Faith

'Comfort, Comfort, O My People'

(*Sound the Bamboo* No. 184)

Asia Sunday 1999

Sermon

'Lord, Heal Us!'

Acts of Hope

Hymn of Hope

'O Healing River'

*(Could be sung by the congregation or a choir or a soloist.
Otherwise the words could be read)*

Symbolic Action of Hope

*(This may be undertaken as the hymn 'O Healing River' is
being sung or words are being read. See 'Water as a
Symbol' in the 'Practical Suggestions' section)*

Litany of Hope

Leader: As water cleanses, nourishes and refreshes, we, creating God, are washed clean, nourished and refreshed by your healing waters. We rejoice that these waters flow so freely. When we drink we are never thirsty again.

People: Quench our thirst, O Lord, we pray.

Leader: We pray for our land of Asia. We are very grateful for the seasons, for fertility of the land that yields us a good harvest and for natural resources. However, our land of Asia is a parched land. The seeds of reconciliation, of wholeness, peace and harmony, seem, at times, to find no nourishment to enable nurturing of strong growth. Our communities are crippled with despair.

People: Water our land of Asia, O God.

May the healing waters flow upon our land.

Leader: We pray for the people of Asia. We thank you for the ethnic diversities and the richness of various cultures. May we overcome barriers that separate, and allow the seeds of respect and openness to one another to be continually watered. In hope we look towards an Asia whose people live together in peace and harmony.

People: Water our land of Asia, O God.

May the healing waters flow upon our people.

Leader: We pray for the people and the churches in Myanmar. May your love and compassion permeate their life so

that people of different ethnic, cultural and religious backgrounds can learn to respect each other as fellow human beings. Sustain those who are suffering. Strengthen your church to be the witness of truth. May your justice flow like a stream, and righteousness like a river that never goes dry.

People: Water the country of Myanmar, O Lord.

May your healing waters flow upon the people.

Leader: We pray for the Christian Conference of Asia and the churches of Asia on this Asia Sunday. We thank you for the movement of the churches towards unity and wholeness. We thank you that you have given us the truth that sets us free and fills us with hope in the midst of suffering.

People: Water our land of Asia, O God.

May the healing waters flow upon our churches.

Leader: We pray for our mission as the people of God. We thank you that you want us to be agents of the healing process. May our prayer, 'Jesus, heal us!' become an expression of our solidarity as a community and our call for radical transformation. Empower us that we may embrace peace and harmony and strengthen us to be liberators. May we stand courageous; resisting all kinds of 'life-threatening or destroying powers' of the society in which we are placed.

People: Water our land of Asia, O God.

May we be agents of healing. Amen

All: Jesus, Heal Us!

Offering and Doxology

The Lord's Prayer

Hymn of Commitment

'Christ Is Our Peace'

(Sound the Bamboo No. 262)

Sending Forth

Leader: May the God who created the flowing water,
The Son who is the living water,
The Spirit who is the cleansing water,
Strengthen and heal you now and always.

People: Amen

Pastoral Solidarity Visit to Indonesia

The Christian Conference of Asia and the World Council of Churches organised a pastoral visit to Indonesia from 27 January to 4 February 1999 with the assistance of the Communion of Churches in Indonesia (PGI). The main objective of the visit was to express the ecumenical family's concern and solidarity with the struggling and suffering people in Indonesia, especially Christians, who have become victims of religious intolerance and persecution.

During meetings with church leaders, government officials and Muslim leaders the delegation tried to convey the ecumenical family's deep concern at the deteriorating situation of religious conflicts and human rights violations against the Christian minority in Indonesia. The delegation made a sincere effort to understand the reasons for the economic, political and human rights situation in the country in the context of the political and economic crisis that has engulfed the country since May 1998.

CCA was represented by Rev. Dr Tso Man King, General Secretary of the Hong Kong Christian Council, Rev. Max Ried, President of the Council of Churches in Aotearoa New Zealand, Mrs Sophia Lizares Bodegon, United Church of Christ in the Philippines, Mr Mok Cheh Liang, Treasurer of the

Council of Churches in Malaysia, and Dr Mathews George Chunakara, Executive Secretary of CCA.

WCC representatives in the team were Rev. David Gill, General Secretary, NCC Australia, Rev. Dick C. Nicolai, Netherlands Reformed Church, Rev. Dr Jochen Mote, United Evangelical Mission, Germany, and Mr Clement John, Executive Secretary, WCC. David Gill was head of the delegation.

The delegation met with church leaders, NGO representatives, Islamic leaders, ethnic Chinese community leaders, student organisation leaders, government officials, the Ministry of Religious Affairs and the National Human Rights Commission. They also spoke with President B.J. Habibie, Minister of Foreign Affairs Ali Alatas, Armed Forces Chief and Defence Minister General Wiranto, Political and Security Affairs Minister General Faisal Tanjung, Home Minister General Syarwan Hamid and Minister/Secretary of State Akbar Tanjung.

Political Situation

After thirty-two years of authoritarian rule, which ended last May with the fall of Suharto, Indonesia is now in a deep crisis. Although the leader has changed, the main political actors are still in command. However the new government is offering wider democratic political reform. A new election law has been passed that promises multi-party democratic elections, the first in forty-four years, to be held in June. This was a milestone in Indonesia's transition from military controlled authoritarian rule. The armed forces have also agreed to accept a reduction in their seats from 75 to 38 in the 500-seat parliament. However student organisation leaders object to even this reduced role of the military in politics and are demanding the complete withdrawal of the military from politics.

Economic Crisis and Human Costs

The roots of Indonesia's many problems lie in its shattered economy—the



The delegation meets with Indonesian Foreign Affairs Minister Ali Alatas

worst economic crisis in more than three decades. This has resulted in riots, food shortages, a devastated corporate sector and a vastly depreciated currency. It is predicted that the economy will shrink between 1 and 2 per cent again this year. Unemployment is estimated now at 14 million, or 15 per cent of the work force, and inflation is rising (in January it rose to 2.97 per cent, sending the annual inflation rate to 70.66 per cent). The collapse of the economy has hit the urban poor and the middle classes exceptionally hard, less so for the rural poor.

Although there are signs of a recovery of the rupiah, this reflects a heavy inflow of aid funds rather than any real return of confidence. Depreciation has failed to bolster Indonesian export competitiveness due to a high import content of between 40 and 45 per cent for industrial products. Imports are more expensive and this has caused soaring prices of foodstuffs and clothing. Food prices jumped by 6.79 per cent and clothing prices rose by 56.64 per cent in January.

The human cost is high. In Jakarta, more beggars and prostitutes mill around the streets at night. Children sleep on traffic islands.

Poor families spend most of their limited income on food, so they are unable to send their children to school. Many have lost their livelihoods and lifetime savings.

The students' call to lower prices and the elimination of corruption resonates with the frustrated working class. Indonesia's universities are at the forefront of political dissent as young Indonesians find their expectations unfulfilled.

The Plight of Ethnic Chinese

Ethnic Chinese in Indonesia are under attack and live in terror and fear. During the May riots ethnic Chinese faced the brunt of the attacks—rape, looting and destruction of their shops and homes. Jakarta based NGO Volunteers Team for Humanity reported that 152 women were raped or sexually abused. Several Chinese have had to leave the country.

Both government officials and Chinese Christian leaders told the delegation that there was clear evidence that the violence aimed at the ethnic Chinese minority was organised and politically motivated. Chinese church leaders in Jakarta expressed feelings of frustration, anger and helplessness in the face of the violence.

Communal Violence

Indonesia has a proud tradition of religious pluralism, but today Indonesian society has degenerated to an intolerant society where religious conflicts have become common. Eighty-seven churches have been affected during the first eight months of President Habibie's term.

Officials and church leaders told the delegation that there is clear evidence of well-organised planning behind each and every occurrence of violence—it is not spontaneous. A network of provocateurs is responsible for the violence, instigated and financed by forces with a vested political interest in creating political instability and the threat of security. These shadowy forces stirred up Christian–Muslim clashes in Ketapang in West Jakarta, the eastern island city of Kupang and the Maluku islands. The provocators were believed to have

been studying different areas well in advance to pit one religious group against another. Widespread clashes between Muslims and Christians have shaken Ambon in the Maluku islands, where Christians and Muslims have long lived in harmony and peace. As a result at least 126 people have died, and several churches and mosques destroyed, causing over 500 billion rupiah (around \$56 million) worth of damages. Indonesian Christians have express fears that a deliberate attempt is being made to Islamise Indonesian society.

President Habibie's Assurance

President B.J Habibie told the delegation that Indonesians had been brought up to respect the different traits of their culture. Thus, burning churches and mosques is unnatural to them. He said events in places such as Banyuwangi, Ketapang, Kupang and Ambon were not caused by sectarian conflict, but had been carried out by people to create trouble and political instability. The various communities had declared in 1945 to forge one Indonesian nation out of the diverse cultures and religions, and they would want those in authority to maintain it that way.

'We will not declare Indonesia a Muslim state even though 95 per cent of Indonesians are Muslim,' he said, adding that Indonesia would remain faithful to its state ideology of Pancasila.

Mathews George Chunakara

A detailed report of the CCA–WCC delegation's visit to Indonesia is available on request from CCA, and is also available on the CCA's website: www.cca.org.hk

Recommendations from the Ecumenical Delegation's Report

Mission Impossible

The coming months will be difficult for Indonesia as it prepares for general elections in June. Restraint and compromise will be needed, in a political climate not conducive to either. Political realism and sophistication will be required of leaders and groups that, in many cases, are new in the field and have lot of learning to do in the run up to the elections. The election itself must have credibility in a society whose credulity has been sorely strained. With diverse aspirants in the political arena, those elected to parliament can expect to have to form coalitions of parties whose agendas may vary widely and whose vested interests may conflict, and this in a country with little experience of coalition politics. The presidency is yet a further problem: the difficulties of the present incumbent are immense. 'I am involved in Mission Impossible,' President Habibie told the delega-

tion. There is little reason to expect that his successor will find life much easier.

The problems facing Indonesia are not only immense but also complex. There are no simple or easy answers, especially because political and social structures are badly frayed and non-existent; the economy is under severe strain. It needs both short-term and long-term measures to see this crisis through. The resolution of the present conflict and defusion of existing tensions will depend on several factors:

- the credibility of the elections
- apprehension and trials of those involved in ethnic and communal violence
- enactment of legislation giving greater autonomy to the provinces
- expeditious resolution of the demands of the people of East Timor, Aceh and Irian Jaya



The CCA–WCC ecumenical delegation meets with the popular Indonesian Islamic leader Abdul Rahman Wahid 'Gus Dur' on ways to promote religious harmony

- encouragement to social organisations to initiate and facilitate inter-religious dialogue for promotion of peace, justice and development
- efforts to mobilise domestic and foreign human and financial resources to eradicate poverty
- change in conditions imposed by Indonesia's international creditors, particularly by IMF.

Ethnic Differences

The violence aimed at the ethnic Chinese minority was organised, there is no doubt about it. It is admitted by virtually everyone. Chinese in Indonesia are no strangers to insecurity and the sense of being outsiders in someone else's country. In the past, too, they have been targets of attacks. The underlying problem of official discriminatory practices and policies goes back far beyond the current crisis, and its different components need to be addressed anew by all concerned: the government, leaders of the indigenous and ethnic communities, and of the churches. The attacks against the Chinese should, however, not be seen so much as an expression of racial hatred but as a part of the political power struggle in Indonesia today. What is a matter of concern, however, is that ethnic differences could so easily be exploited for other ends.

Building Relationships

The severity of attacks on houses of worship and communal violence involving Muslims and Christians came as a surprise to many Indonesians. Indonesians, rightly, are proud of their tradition of religious pluralism, but it may be that such pluralism has been too much taken for granted and the absence of visible conflict assumed to indicate that all was well between the two faith communities. Any relationship taken for granted is a relationship in trouble. Christian and Muslim communities in Indonesia would be wise to be more active in building relationships of trust and understanding, particularly at local levels, and especially among young people. This would prevent religious differences to be so easily exploited for other purposes.

Silver Lining

There is a silver lining to the troubles Indonesians face. The recent spate of violence has galvanised an unprecedented action from wide sectors, Muslim Malays and Christians, including Chinese of overseas and local descent. Having been subjected to thirty years of suppression and limited political action, the opportunity to work together provides avenues for learning new models of cooperation among ethnic and religious groups. New avenues of engagement with the government have likewise been opened through NGO cooperation.

Pancasila

Indonesians remain committed to Pancasila despite the present difficulties. Given the diversity of its cultures, religions and traditions, Pancasila has served Indonesia well. It provides the foundation for the unity of its people. Irrespective of the present trend towards communal and ethnic violence, Indonesian people remain confident that Pancasila's future as the state's ideology is secure.

Recommendations

- The WCC/CCA should convey to the Indonesian government their deep concern that the question of responsibility for the recent acts of violence remains unresolved. This matter needs to be addressed with renewed urgency.
- The WCC/CCA should encourage member churches and related agencies to help resource significant initiatives aimed at strengthening inter-faith relationships in Indonesia.
- The WCC/CCA should constantly monitor the situation in Indonesia. Every effort should be made to accompany the churches through visitations, prayers of solidarity support and through sharing and exchange of information.
- PGI be encouraged to consider developing a strategy to improve collaboration between ethnic Chinese and other Christians. This might include reviewing its capacity to foster inter-faith and inter-ethnic relations and identifying ways to improve pastoral care for ethnic Chinese Indonesians at home and abroad.

Churches Attacked in Gujarat

Christmas in 1998 was not the same for the Christian community in Gujarat. Churches were attacked by unidentified groups who went on a rampage. Mobs damaged and destroyed the premises of many churches and Christian institutions, and even attacked people, injuring some. The violence continues unabated and to date many of the institutions run by minorities have been attacked, particularly in the Dang District of Gujarat. Mobs have pelted stones and footwear at shrines, chapels and churches. In one incident a school principal was injured.

The ruling Bharatiya Janata Party government in Gujarat denied any role in the attacks. However it is widely understood that the attacks on churches and institutions run by Christians have been provoked, masterminded and carried out by the Sangh Parivar of the Bharatiya Janata Party. Although the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh and the Vishwa Hindu Parishad, which are members of the Sangh Parivar, have made repeated statements disassociating themselves from the violence it cannot be ruled out. The members of a right wing community called the Hindu Dharmajagaran Manch have been clashing with Christian groups and inflicting physical injuries. Several vehicles belonging to minorities were torched. On Christmas Day mobs attacked churches, schools and institutions near Ahwa in Limbayat Police Station in Surat. Many were injured.

The opposition parties in the parliament have demanded the imposition of president's rule in the state of Gujarat to bring the state back to normal.

The media has reported extensively on these issues and the Prime Minister, Shri Atal Behari Vajpayee, has expressed his deep sense of shock and shame. Nevertheless minority communities are not satisfied with the actions taken so far and are also doubtful if the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party will be able to bring the culprits to justice, as most of them belong to the Sangh Parivar.

The most serious incident reported was from Vaki village near Dang District, where a mob of 500 people armed and in a frenzy attacked a church and looted nearby shops. In the firing more than seven people sustained bullet injuries and had to be hospitalised. CNI District Superintendent, Rev. T.V. Gaikwad, alleged that the firing was aimed at the minority community.

Many petitions and memorandums have been sent to the President, Prime Minister and Home Minister. Archbishop Alan de Lastic of Delhi has had meetings with the Prime Minister and has been assured that things will be brought under control. The Bharatiya Janata Party central government has asked the Chief Minister of Gujarat, Keshubhai Patel (also of the Bharatiya Janata Party) to bring the situation under control.

The National Council of Churches in India sent a high-powered delegation led by the President, Dr. K. Rajaratnam, to Gujarat to assess the situation and they also submitted a memorandum to the Governor and the Chief Minister of Gujarat and proceeded to Delhi to meet the President and the Prime Minister.

The fact-finding team included the Reverend Dr Ipe Joseph, General Secretary, National Council of Churches in India, the Most Reverend Vinod Peter, Moderator, Church of North India, Reverend Dr Prasanna Kumari, Executive Secretary, United Evangelical Lutheran Church in India, and Reverend Dr Samuel Meshak. The President of the National Council of Churches in India has also been on national television and quoted in the national press on this issue.

In one press conference held at Chennai, an ecumenical front addressed the press and expressed shock and deep grief at the relentless attacks on Christians, congregations, Christian service institutions and worship centres in different parts of the country, especially in Gujarat.

He denied allegations of forced conversions by missionaries and the impression created that foreign missionaries were engaged in conversion activities in the country.

The Right Reverend Arul Das James, Roman Catholic Bishop of Delhi, and the Right Reverend M. Azariah also addressed the press conference.

National Council of Churches in India Press Statement on Gujarat

The National Council of Churches in India (NCCI), the representative body of twenty-nine member churches in India, wishes to express grave concern over the incidents of attacks on the Christians in south Gujarat, especially in the districts of Dang and Surat. The unabated violence which started during the Christmas week is most unfortunate as it reflects the failure of the Gujarat Government to ensure law and order and also its failure to ensure the safety and security of the life and properties of its citizens, particularly those of minority communities.

As the representative body of twenty-nine member churches we have upheld and abided by the principle of 'conversation', not conversion. We are therefore deeply disturbed by the allegations of conversions and the attempt to rationalise violence by some members of Sangh Parivar as a reaction to conversions. The Gujarat Government must ensure that there is an immediate halt to this kind of violence and threats to the life and properties of minorities.

The Church in India is committed to serve the people of our nation. We are particularly amused at the theory being propagated by the VHP that through education the church will proselytise the people of our nation. We condemn this attempt at opinion making as mischievous and frivolous. We assure all our fellow citizens that the church through its educational ministry has no such intent.

We earnestly appeal to the Home Ministry of the Central Government to take all necessary steps to ensure law and order in parts of Gujarat which are experiencing communal violence, and assure the nation that such

tendencies will be curbed in future. The present situation in Gujarat may lead to an erosion in the level of confidence of the people in the capacity of the 'state' to ensure the safety of the citizens' lives and properties.

We demand that:

- a thorough enquiry be undertaken by the National Commission on Human Rights and the National Commission on Minorities on the recent events in Gujarat and punishment be meted out to those responsible for the crime of instigating communal violence
- the Central Government take cognisance of and suitable action be taken on individuals and organisations indulging in making mischievous and inflammatory statements through the media
- an assurance from the Prime Minister and his Cabinet be given ensuring protection to their lives and properties of minorities in India
- the provisions of the constitution enshrining the rights of the minorities be upheld by the central and the state governments.

We fervently appeal to the churches in Gujarat and all over the nation to prayerfully maintain peace and not indulge in actions tantamount to retaliation.

We affirm our commitment to continue to serve the nation and the people of India. As we enter the new year we pray that the Prince of Peace grant our national leaders courage and wisdom to take our people on the path of peace and prosperity.

Jai Bharat.

*Dr K. Rajaratnam, President, NCCI
Rev. Dr Ipe Joseph, General Secretary, NCCI*

Ninetieth Anniversary

The Evangelical Methodist Church in the Philippines (IEMELIF) celebrated its ninetieth anniversary on 28 February 1999 at the Philippine International Convention Centre in Manila. The IEMELIF church was the first indigenous Protestant church in the Philippines. It was founded in 1909 by a group of members of the then Meth-

odist Episcopal Church, impelled by a spirit of nationalism. According to Bishop George F. Castro, General Superintendent of IEMELIF, who is also member of the CCA General Committee, from the original few hundred in 1909 the membership has grown to 50,000 in several hundred congregations throughout the country.

CCA General Committee Meets in Kerala

For the first time in its history, the Christian Conference of Asia held its General Committee meeting in India.

The meeting was hosted by the Mar Thoma Syrian Church of Malabar, and was held at the Mar Thoma Education Centre in Charalmount, Piruvalla, Kerala, on 24–26 November 1998. Meetings of various related committees were held beginning 21 November.

The General Committee and related committees received reports on programs, finance and the overall state of CCA. Significant aspects of the reports and of the decisions made include the following:

- The General Committee received the good news from the Finance Committee that the large deficit with which we started the term has been covered, and that we start the next year not only with a balanced budget but also with a small surplus. It approved in this light a modestly larger budget for 1999, with the strong instruction to staff to abide by the same financial policies that have been enunciated during the past two years, and as a result of which we have achieved a better financial standing. It also underscored the need to strengthen the financial base of the CCA from among Asian churches
- It approved the base plans for the next General Assembly as proposed by the General Assembly Preparatory Committee. The date set is 1–6 June 2000. It instructed the Preparatory Committee to draw the theme of the Assembly from the text John 10:10, which will embody the meaning and challenge of Christ's ministry 'that they may have life and have it in its fullness'. [Subsequently an invitation from the Christian Evangelical Church in Minahasa (GMIM), North Sulawesi, Indonesia, to host the assembly has been accepted.]
- It received and adopted the recommendation of the Executive Committee to circulate to member churches and councils and ask them to discuss and give their response to a proposal on a new 'Vision and Structure' of CCA. The proposal identifies new priorities towards the next century, and suggests a more modest and appropriate structure and style of operation for CCA that is more flexible to respond to new challenges and less costly to maintain. The proposal also raises the issue of the role of a 'regional ecumenical organisation' like the CCA amidst the various layers and expression of ecumenical work that have emerged since the CCA's founding forty years ago.



The CCA General Committee is welcomed by the Most Rev. Dr Alexander Mar Thoma, Metropolitan of the Mar Thoma Church

- It authorised the Executive Committee to act on amendments to the constitution that might be proposed, if the Vision and Structure report receives a positive response from the churches. It also appointed a small working committee to oversee and collate the results of this process of discussion and consultation and to draft concrete proposals to the Assembly that might result.
- It received proposals for other amendments to the constitution that came from the report of the Constitutional Review Committee.
- It appointed new Executive Staff: Dr Ahn Jaewoong of Korea as Associate General Secretary for Finance and Dr Daniel S. Thiagarajah of Sri Lanka as Executive Secretary for Mission and Evangelism, with terms of four years beginning 1 January 1999. It also authorised the announcement of vacancies for the positions of Executive Secretary for Urban Rural Mission and Executive Secretary for Women's Concerns after 1 January 1999, and authorised the Executive Committee to make the appointments in May 1999.

Meeting in Charalmount and with the hosting of the Mar Thoma Church provided occasion not just for the business meetings but also for direct contact with and experience of the very rich tradition of Mar Thoma life, work and spirituality. The Mar Thoma Syrian Church is one of the oldest churches of the Christian family and traces its origin and founding in 52 AD to the visit of St Thomas, one of the twelve apostles of Jesus Christ, in Kerala. A founding member of the CCA,



The General Committee is welcomed by His Holiness Baselios Marthoma Mathews II, Catholicos of the East and Malankara Metropolitan

it has provided important leadership of people and of life and thought in various aspects of the life of the ecumenical movement in Asia. Committee members and participants worshipped in various Mar Thoma congregations on Sunday, 22 November, and had occasion to meet with the highest leadership and staff of the Mar Thoma Church. We were all officially received and hosted at a dinner by the head of the church, the Most Reverend Dr Alexander Mar Thoma, Metropolitan at the Mar Thoma headquarters in Thiruvalla. Metropolitan Alexander was present in Prapat at the founding of the EACC in May 1957.

Being in Kerala also provided occasion for meetings with the Orthodox constituency of CCA. Some members of the General Committee attended worship at Orthodox churches during the Sunday we were in Kerala. We visited the renowned Orthodox Theological Seminary in Kottayam, whose principal, Fr Dr K.M. George, is a member of the CCA's Ad Hoc Committee on Clustering and who has been appointed to the new Committee on Vision and Structure. Fr George's pred-

ecessor as principal of the seminary was the late Metropolitan Paulos Mar Gregorios, who was one of the early leaders of the CCA, and an Associate General Secretary and President of the World Council of Churches. We were also received officially at dinner by His Holiness Baselios Marthoma Mathews II, the Catholicos of the East and Malankara Metropolitan, and other bishops and leaders of the church at the Metropolitan Catholicate Palace in Kottayam. The Catholicos was a member of the Continuation Committee of the East Asia Christian Conference (EACC) in formation that prepared the formal founding of EACC in 1957 in Prapat, Indonesia.

As Bishop Kenneth Fernando put it in his response to the warm welcome of the Catholicos in Kottayam, in coming to Kerala we were not just meeting with member churches, 'we were paying our respects to our founding fathers'. To some of us, it was also an encounter with a very 'old', respected and very rich tradition of the Christian church about which some of us know very little.

Feliciano V. Cariño

Asia Ecumenical Course 1998

Twenty-three delegates from fourteen countries, twelve denominations and, for the first time, members from the Catholic church, attended the 1998 Asia Ecumenical Course, held in Thailand, 4–30 October. The program was held in three areas in Thailand—Bangkok, Chiangrai and Chiangmai. The theme for the course was ‘Towards Inclusive Community’, exposing the delegates to an experience of the diversity of Asian life.

The course covered a wide diversity of subjects. In Bangkok, the focus was on the effects, both positive and negative, of globalisation, prostitution and poverty. In Chiangrai the focus shifted to drug addiction, HIV/AIDS, indigenous issues, migrant workers and refugees and, especially, how the local churches are impressively dealing with these issues. In Chiangmai the issue of care for children suffering

with HIV/AIDS was covered through exposure to the Agape Home. The issue of interfaith dialogue, presented by Fr Dr Thomas Michel, was covered, especially in relation to Islam and Buddhism. Ecumenism and the necessity of working together as the one church was highlighted throughout the course.

A number of resource people assisted in the reflections of the group over the four weeks, with a combination of theoretical and experiential input. The resource people included staff from CCA, theologians from Asian seminaries and specialists in related topics. The resource people represented a variety of perspectives and denominational backgrounds.

For the participants the exposure program proved both confronting and challenging. Among the most moving was the work being done in the areas of drug addiction, prevention of child

prostitution and, as mentioned, among those suffering from HIV/AIDS. All the participants believed the work by the churches in Thailand in these areas is exceptional, considering the limited resources. We were all challenged to address these issues on return to our home countries.

The Bible study program proved to be an unanticipated highlight of the course. The presenters, Dr Prawate Kidharn, Rev. Dr Henriette Hutabarat, Rev. Septemmy Lakawa, Rev. Dr Hermen Shastri and Fr Dr Banawiratama, challenged the participants to read the Bible with ‘new eyes’, from the perspective of the poor and marginalised of Asia. All greatly appreciated being exposed to the insights of the narrative hermeneutic model as presented by Septemmy Lakawa, a model many said they will use further within their own contexts.

Each day began with worship prepared by the participants. This enabled the important theological and exposure program to be covered in prayer and our own individual and communal concerns lifted up to God. Sunday worship was held in a variety of local Christian churches that further enabled the participants to be exposed to facets of church life in Thailand.

Finally, integral to the course was the necessary community building between members of the group. This was marked by care, support, fun and good humour. Many participants vowed to keep in contact after the course is ended and many hoped to meet again in the future.

Chris McLeod



To CCA and to all those who assisted in the course we the participants say thank you. The comments from some of the participants below highlight our gratitude further.

Chris McLeod, Australia

It was good to be exposed to the hill tribes of North Thailand. We were given an understanding of their basic needs.

Suphan Muangsak, Thailand

Many issues live in my mind, the slums, the bridge communities of Bangkok, the sex industry, the tragedy of AIDS ... but above all the way the faith communities are working with and struggling with the problems.

David Bush, Aotearoa New Zealand

The challenging Bible studies, heart-breaking exposures, thought-provoking presentations! Lots of fun, friends from all over Asia ... three cheers to CCA for bringing us together.

Jolly Jacob, India

The constant reminder to look into the eyes of the other and to recognise the eyes of a brother or sister.

Sr Dorothy Lim, Singapore

The effects of migrant workers are my major concern. Taiwan employs thousands of migrant workers every year. This is causing tension in the community. The church has an important role in addressing this tension.

Po-Lun Tsai, Taiwan

The exposure trips spoke not just to my head but also to my heart ... I realised that my eyes need to be open to the needs at home and to work ecumenically in love and care assisting the suffering.

Roshan Mendis, Sri Lanka.

'New' is the only word I can use to describe my experience. Now is the time to ecumenically build inclusive community. Every believer should open their eyes with a new vision.

We the participants need to scatter ecumenical seeds without delay through sharing, and visiting together from the grass-roots level.

Nason Marandy, Bangladesh

Though we came from different countries, languages and cultures we are one. Over the last three weeks we have been like a family ... the family of God.

Thavy Meas, Cambodia

CCA–UN/ESCAP Training Program in Nepal

The UN/ESCAP Human Resource Development Course for Youth in Development was conducted by the Ministry of Youth, Sport and Culture of the Government of Nepal with the assistance of UN/ESCAP and CCA to promote broad-based training and skills development for government staff and NGO youth workers in Nepal. The program was held at the Nepal Administrative Staff College (NASC) in Kathmandu, 13–18 January 1999.

Mr Joop Theunissen emphasised the importance of the course was that

'for one thing, about 60 per cent of the world's youth live in Asia and the Pacific. Limited opportunities for education and training and viable employment, as well as lack of access to health and social services are just a few of the issues that affect young people in developing countries.'

The course included an analysis of the youth situation in the Asia–Pacific region, the situation of youth in Nepal, national development policy and plans in Nepal and various presentations on development and project

management. A hands-on experience in conducting a project monitoring visit was organised.

Among a total of thirty-five participants, about fifteen came from various non-governmental organisations, including five from church-related organisations. This was the first time and a most privileged occasion for the church in Nepal to be able to learn and share common concerns in national development.

Mr Tirtha Thapa, a convenor of the Nepal Christian Society and a partici-

pant, said, 'In the history of Nepal, this is the first time there has been an invitation from His Majesty's Government to the Christian community to take part in such a training program. It was a great opportunity for us Christians to learn and share together with government officials and others.

'The Lord used us to give government officials and other non-Christians a real taste of Christianity, where they

came to know Christians in Nepal also have deep concerns for the development of our nation. We are seeking more opportunities to join hands with government and non-government organisations in bringing peace and prosperity to Nepal.'

The CCA-UN/ESCAP Joint Program on the Training of Trainers in Youth Work was initiated in 1979 by CCPD-WCC, supported by EZE, Germany, to

enhance the participation of youth in national development and to encourage constructive social participation in poverty alleviation.

Since 1989 CCA has taken a direct responsibility in its organisation. The program is now in its third phase, targeting the following countries: Lao PDR, Cambodia, Vietnam, Myanmar, Nepal, the Maldives and the People's Republic of China.

Ecumenical Study Project

The Religious Situation: Issues, Perspectives, and Challenges to Ecumenical Life

The second session of the Ecumenical Study Project, 'The Religious Situation: Problems, Perspectives and Challenges for the Ecumenical Movement', which was launched in May 1998 by the Ecumenical Institute in Bossey (see *CCA News*, August 1998, page 21), was held 5–9 January 1999. Held again at the Ecumenical Institute in Bossey, participants included members of the study group, and some invited consultants. The group members included Kim Yong Bock of Korea, Wesley Ariarajah of Sri Lanka, Grace Davie of the UK, Hans Ucko of Finland, Tarek Mitri of Lebanon, Andre Doogers of the Netherlands, and Heinrich Shaeffer of Germany. The consultants included Professor Bas de Gay Foortmann of the International Institute of Social Studies of The Hague, and Professor Cees Hammelinck of the International Institute of Mass Communication, Amsterdam, both in the Netherlands. Dr Julio de Santa Ana of the Ecumenical Institute is Director of the Study Project.

Focusing its attention in this session on the issue of 'Religions and Economics,' the session went through three related phases. The first phase involved the discussion of issues related to three areas of concern: the prevailing economic situation and the challenges which current trends pose to religious bodies, the impact of

mass communication on the world economy, and the new expressions of 'exclusion' in the current world economic situation.

The second phase dealt with presentations and discussion of problems and perspectives on economic life from a number of religious traditions: 'Hinduism and Economics' by Wesley Ariarajah, 'Confucian Ethics and Prevailing Economic Life' by Kim Yong Bock, 'Judaism and Economics' by Hans Ucko, 'Financing Churches in Europe' by Grace Davie, and 'Financing Islam in America' by Jane Smith.

The third phase involved the identification by the group of some of the main issues and focuses of the relationship between religions and economic life. Noting that there is an ongoing deep transformation of economic practice influenced by new technologies that has produced the unprecedented phenomenon of 'globalisation,' the group also concluded that religions were unprepared to face the new economic situation and really respond to its challenges.

The proceedings and the papers of the session are being edited for publication and circulation. The Third Session will meet in August 1999, and will focus its attention on 'religion and contemporary political life'.

Feliciano V. Cariño

NCCs General Secretaries Meeting

The Asia NCCs General Secretaries Meeting held in New Delhi, 18–19 September 1998, received unanimous appreciation from the participants. The meeting provided opportunities for general secretaries, people who are professionally involved in the ecumenical movement, to meet one another and to share issues of common concern.

All felt that the meeting should be organised on a regular basis and proposed to hold another in two years. Recognising the present limited resources in CCA, there was a suggestion that if adequate notice was given, and letters addressed to NCCs ahead of time, some NCCs might be encouraged to budget some contribution towards the travel expenses of its general secretary.

Ecumenical Forum

There was general acceptance of the WCC proposal to have an ecumenical forum, though some aspects and im-

plications were still need of clarification, e.g. the nature of the meeting, the form of participation, who is to be invited etc. It is crucial that channels of dialogue and cooperation be developed with evangelical organisations and Pentecostal and free churches outside current ecumenical structures. Perhaps NCCs could initiate such a forum in their own countries.

Ecumenical Leadership Development

The general secretaries identified the issue of leadership development as a concern. This involves youth ecumenical formation in general, as well as second-line leadership formation in the churches and councils of Asia. How CCA could assist NCCs in such leadership development was a point of discussion.

Financial Constraint

General secretaries sympathised with CCA's financial constraints and also noted the significant decrease in the

traditional source of ecumenical work. Serious discussion must begin with each and every member church and council for strategic fund raising. At the same time it was noted that some NCCs, for numerous reasons, also face the same financial difficulties themselves.

Strengthening Communications

The meeting affirmed the important role of NCCs in the program implementation of CCA. Strengthening communications between CCA and NCCs, therefore, is crucial. It was felt that one way to facilitate this process is for country representatives at various CCA committees to regularly report to their respective NCC. This would enable NCCs to forward emerging concerns in CCA deliberations in a comprehensive and sustained way to the member churches in the respective countries.

*Hermen Shastri,
Prince Devanandan,
Henriette Hutabarat*



Peace in Cambodia

Asia Youth Week with the Cambodian Christian Youth Association

This was the first time Cambodia had celebrated Asia Youth Week. About sixty people attended, including some pastors, elders and young people from all the different Khmer churches in Phnom Penh. The service was organised combining the ideas of different young



people and their churches. It was an opportunity for us to express our ideas, songs, prayers and understanding about peace.

Peace is a good word. Through the worship we were able to see what an important topic peace is in the Asian context. We also realised how hard it is for the Cambodian people to come to terms with this concept. For a long time the people here have struggled with an ongoing civil war. The political conflict has brought poverty to people. The recent Cambodian election did not bring reconciliation as it was hoped but rather more violations. The government cracked down after the election on people demonstrating against the result, injuring and killing many demonstrators and their families. As the young people of Christ we have a desire to promote peace and proclaim Jesus as the source of that

peace. In our worship we focused on Jesus' words, 'My peace I leave you, my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.' (John 14:27)

Nhiem Thavy, the guest preacher for the worship, said, 'We start by having the peace in our hearts which we received from Jesus. We show peace in our society as people of God who respect the law. Just start by obeying the traffic laws!'

One pastor, Say Bunthon, shared his perspective, 'We cannot establish a real peace except through Christ who completes our heart.'

Min Sreypoch sang the beautiful song, *Peace in a Storm*, which has the words, 'Only the love of Jesus can save your life, that is the peace in the storm.' To conclude, Emma Leslie, an FIM intern, sent us out with a blessing

in Khmer, 'Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.'

The worship concluded with refreshments, which people enjoyed while they wrote their perspectives on peace on the CCYA peace wall. We also distributed peace postcards so that people could spread the message of peace

beyond our worship service. The peace wall was highly successful. People wrote many different things:

- Peace is the time without war.
- Peace is in our God.
- Peace is a life within Jesus.
- If you want peace let it start in your heart first.

Through this experience we at CCYA realised that we are young in both faith and experience but we are eager to study more about such things as peace and justice. We want to be in unity with one another and we want peace in our country. We have written our own perspective on peace:

'The young people learn from the unity of their elder leaders, to establish peace from one's heart, one church and to reflect to our nation by serving Christ the peace owner.'

*Cambodia Christian
Youth Association*

Globalisation: A Challenge to Asian Youth

Learning how Asian youth are going through the process of globalisation is a very interesting experience. It becomes even more interesting when the young people involved come from diverse social, economic, cultural and religious backgrounds. Through the Exchange Training Workshop for Rural Youth, conducted by the CCA Youth Desk during 18–25 October 1998 in Murre and Lahore, Pakistan, participants were able to learn from each other, especially regarding the impact of globalisation on the rural communities of Asia. Twenty-four Christian youth from different rural communities in Pakistan, Bangladesh, Malaysia and Indonesia participated.

The occasion was especially meaningful for the Pakistani Christian youth as it was the first time they had hosted an international youth program. Unfortunately, they cannot always express themselves freely, because of the Muslim Law (Syariat) in Pakistan.

In the first part of the workshop, the participants were equipped with the competence of analysing a situation and identifying a project. The experiences of the rural youth projects shared by the international participants had a particular advantage for the Pakistani youth as most of them were inexperienced in running projects.

The participants were most impressed with an exposure trip to the Ghazi Barotha Hydropower Project. This giant project is planned to generate a world-record 1,450 MW. Unfortunately,

the developer did not plan well enough to take care of the communities affected by the project. Without proper compensation, the local people were asked to move to a new area far away from their cultivated land and schools. Most of them lost their means of livelihood and became unemployed. Poverty, together with other problems such as a lack of public facilities and transportation, ensured daily life became a struggle for them.

The participants used the workshop to share experiences of the negative impact of globalisation on the rural communities in their countries. In Indonesia, development projects create problems for people, especially indigenous people such as in Irian Jaya. Most of the people in the highlands of Irian Jaya live in poverty and are ignored by the Indonesian government. A famine in Jaya Wijaya in 1997 caused more than 1,000 deaths. It is ironic

that Irian Jaya is very rich with gold mines and many other natural resources, yet the people are living in poverty.

In order to develop human resources, Christian communities in Malaysia run skills training programs and schools, and encourage youth participation in their villages.

In Bangladesh, rural youth cooperatives to enhance self-reliance are encouraged and leadership training for rural youth is conducted.

The process of globalisation challenged the role of Christian youth: How do we view the development projects in our countries? How do we balance the need of development with the impact of globalisation?

Globalisation becomes one of the main concerns for Asian Christian youth as we enter the third millennium.

Angela Kakerissa



Mission Team to Indonesia

The current economic crisis in Indonesia has affected the lives of many people, especially in urban areas. People on fixed incomes are unable to cope with inflation and the business sector is suffering from setbacks in sales and high bank interest rates.

A CCA Development and Service Mission Team—Dr Prawate Khid-arn, Rev. Toshi Yamamoto, Pastor Mario Latido and Mrs Stien Jalil—visited churches and church-related organisations and groups in Bali, Ujung Pandang, Toraja and Jakarta during 9–18 December 1998 to validate information received on the present problems encountered by Christians in Indonesia, to consult with people about possible solutions to alleviate the situation, and to identify cooperative efforts and programs that could assist Christians in their struggle for reform.

Pdt. J. Ketut Arkur, Director of Maha Bhoga Foundation, said the Church of Bali has been involved in the social improvement of its congregations through the development of economic activities. However since last May there has been a tremendous drop in the number of tourists to Bali. In addition the financial crisis in 1997 caused the closure of many factories and many people were laid off from their jobs. The foundation, together with fourteen NGOs and the

government, formulated skills-development programs to retrain laid-off employees. After the retraining program, people are given assistance to look for another job.

In Ujung Pandang, the Christian World Service (CWS) runs the 'Food for Work Program', which includes road, irrigation, farmland development and clean water supply projects. CWS, with the assistance of the US government, has promised to deliver about 400,000 million tonnes of rice in three years to help about 37,000 people in eleven districts. Most of

these people in the community have only two meals a day. They harvest only corn and cassava as food and need to sell the surplus to meet the needs of their children.

Poverty has caused many people in Sulawesi to migrate to other parts of Indonesia, particularly Sumatra. There were reports that young girls who had migrated to Brunei and Sabah went into brothels and prostitution dens.

The Rosary Church in Ujung Pandang, which was burnt on 4 December 1998, was visited by the mission team on the way to the Theological Seminary in Eastern Indonesia. Students and faculty members told how they had hoped that the government would stop the burning of the church and a mosque before the situation got out of hand. However many of the students believe that some discontented and corrupt members of the military were behind the chaos.

The CCI (Communion of Churches in Indonesia) Wilayah Suselra officers in Ujung Pandang confirmed that the natural calamity of *El Nino*, together with the political upheaval had worsened economic conditions in the whole country. Some of the PGI leadership, feel the present government will have a hard time gaining credibility as President Habibie is widely perceived as former President Suharto's appointed adjutant and crony.



Ketapang Christ Church, Jakarta, which was burned in October 1998

In Toraja, Bishop Dr I.P. Lambe, Moderator of the Toraja Church, said that although the financial crisis has affected the living standard of people it has not curtailed religious activities. Church festivities continue, if not as lavish. The team had a very enlightening discussion with the executive members of the CCI board. They said May 1998 was a dark period in the history of Indonesia. It was a time of mob rule and the peace they had been guarding being shattered. Students may have forced the resignation of Suharto, but a clone was installed. The economic crisis, the burning of churches and mosques and social unrest are outcomes of the political situation. The economic recovery will be a monumental task needing herculean ideas to prevent civil strife and violence.

The cooperative churches in Jakarta assist the poor by providing

some basic necessities and supporting the students' movement for reforms. The CCI, through PARPEM, has asked the government to provide safety nets to lessen the impact of economic cri-

sis. They are also providing cheap rice in the market, but this cannot be sustained for long.

Prawate Khid-arn (excerpted from the report of the Mission Team)



Meeting with the staff of CWS, Ujung Pandang

Forthcoming CCA Events

Development Management Training

28 February–27 March 1999

Jointly organised by Development and Service and Youth Desks

Human Rights and Religious Liberty Study Program

Thailand, 23–27 March 1999

3rd Annual Human Rights Training Program for Church Workers

Chiang Mai, Thailand, 25–31 May 1999

For further information, please contact Dr Mathews George Chunakara, CCA International Affairs Unit

CCA Executive Committee Meeting

Hong Kong, 5–9 May 1999

2nd Congress of Asian Theologians (CATS)

Ecumenical Christian Centre, Bangalore, India,

9–15 August 1999

Theme: 'Celebrating Life in Asia', with the following subthemes: 'Life in the Age of Globalisation', 'Life and Spirituality in the Midst of Religious and Cultural Plurality of Asia' and 'Celebration, Communion and Solidarity'

For further information and other enquiries contact Dr Lakshmi Daniel, CATS–CCA, e-mail: catscca@hk.super.net

11th CCA General Assembly

1–6 June 2000

Hosted by the Christian Evangelical Church in Minahasa (GMIM), North Sulawesi, Indonesia

Theme: 'Time for Fullness of Life for All' (John 10:10)

New CCA Staff



Ahn Jaewoong

Dr Ahn Jaewoong of Korea, a member of the Presbyterian Church of Korea (PCK), has been appointed Associate General Secretary for Finance for a term of four years beginning 1 January 1999. Ahn is not new to CCA or the ecumenical movement. He served as Regional Secretary for Asia and the Pacific of the World Student Christian Federation (WSCF) in 1980–86 and as Executive Secretary for Urban Rural Mission (URM) of CCA in 1990–95. Before his new appointment with CCA he served as Director of the Christian Institute for the Study of Justice and Development in Seoul, Korea, and as Adjunct Professor of San Francisco Theological Seminary in San Anselmo, California, USA. Ahn holds a MDiv from the Divinity School of Harvard University, an LHD from Mary Holmes College, and is a candidate for a PhD at Utrecht University in the Netherlands.



Daniel S. Thiagarajah

Dr Daniel S. Thiagarajah of Sri Lanka, a priest of the Church of South India, Jaffna Diocese, was appointed Executive Secretary for Mission and Evangelism for a term of four years beginning 1 January 1999. Ordained as a deacon in 1982 and presbyter in 1984, Daniel served parishes in different parts of Sri Lanka, especially Jaffna. He has been a participant and resource person in various activities of CCA, the Association of Christian Institutes for Social Action in Asia (ACISCA) and the National Christian Council of Sri Lanka (NCCSL). He was a Missionary in Residence in the Indiana–Kentucky Conference of the United Church of Christ, USA, in 1986–87. Prior to his appointment with CCA, he occupied the position of Secretary for Theological Concerns of the NCCSL, and was the Organising Secretary of the National Ecumenical Conference for Sri Lanka held in Kandy in 1997. He holds a BD from Serampore College in India, an STM from the Christian Theological Seminary in Indianapolis, Indiana, USA, and a PhD from the University of Jaffna in Sri Lanka.



Lakshmi Daniel

Dr Lakshmi Daniel of India, a member of the Church of South India (CSI), joined the CCA staff as Consultant for Theological Concerns, beginning 15 January 1999. Appointed in collaboration with the Frontier Internship in Mission (FIM) and the Council for World Mission (CWM), Lakshmi assumes primary responsibility for the planning and organisation of the Second Meeting of the Congress of Asian Theologians (CATS II), and related activities and publications of theological concerns. She served in various capacities before—as Coordinator of the Documentation for Action Groups in Asia (DAGA) and as Researcher at the Legal Research Institute in Madras, India. She still serves as a Researcher of the Hong Kong Federation of Youth Organisations. She holds a BA from the College of Wooster in Ohio, USA, an MPhil from the University of Cambridge, UK, and a DPhil from the University of Oxford, UK.

Former CCA Staff

Ms Christine Ledger of the Anglican Church in Australia was the CCA Associate General Secretary for Finance until 31 December 1998. Early this year, Chris returned to Australia to be closer and more available to her parents in their old age. Her new address is: Christine Ledger, 52 Grayson Street, Hackett ACT 2602, Australia.

Mr Peter Yawata of the Anglican Church in Japan, the CCA Executive Secretary for Urban Rural Mission, ended his service in December 1998.

Rev. Glynthea Finger of the Churches of Christ in Australia was the CCA Executive Secretary for Education since February 1994 and Coordinator of the CCA Program on Women's Concerns since September 1996. Glynthea resigned in December 1998. Due to the serious illness of her mother, she decided to return to Australia to take care of her parents. Her new address is 30 Kenneth Street, Tarragindi Qld 4121, Australia.

Rev. Dr Dhyanchand Carr, former CCA Executive Secretary for Mission and Evangelism, returned to Tamilnadu Theological Seminary in June 1998 where he is now Principal.

Lutheran Officers

The 24th Triennial Conference of the United Evangelical Lutheran Church in India, which met 5–7 November 1998,

elected the following members as its new officers for the triennium beginning November 1998.

President: The Rt Rev. John Franklin, Bishop, ALC

Vice Presidents: The Rev. Dr G. Emmanuel, President, AELC, Presiding Bishop Elect and the Rt Rev. Ch.

P.H. Prokash, Bishop, JELC Executive Secretary, India LWF

National Committee: Dr K.

Rajaratnam, SALC

Executive Secretary: The Rev. Dr Prasanna Kumari, ALC

Joint Secretary: Prof. S.A. Brown, MPELC

Treasurer: Ms Grace Subbiah, IELC

First Woman Vice Moderator

The Presbyterian Church in the Republic of Korea (PROK) held its 83rd General Assembly during 14–17 September in the newly built Bun-Dang Hanshin church in the suburban city of Bun-Dang, south of Seoul.

With the election of its first woman vice moderator, Ms Sohn Sook Ja, PROK continues its prophetic tradition for justice within the church and society. The PROK was the first Presbyterian church denomination to ordain women as elders in 1957 and as ministers in 1977. Supporters for women in more leadership positions were excited and encouraged by the election.

On the historic night when Elder Sohn was elected, there were other elections for key positions in the General Assembly leadership. The New Moderator is Rev. Man-Won Kang. In

addition to Elder Sohn as the Lay Vice Moderator, Rev. Joong-Pyo Lee is the newly elected Clergy Vice Moderator. Rev. Dr Jong-Wha Park was re-elected to a second four-year term as General Secretary. *PROK News*

Migrant Workers Mission Association

On Wednesday, 14 October, the Migrant Workers Mission Association of the Presbyterian Church in the Republic of Korea met for its inaugural meeting in the General Assembly office. Directors and other staff personnel gathered to discuss the nature and purpose of the association and issues facing centres for migrant workers, especially during this time of economic crisis.

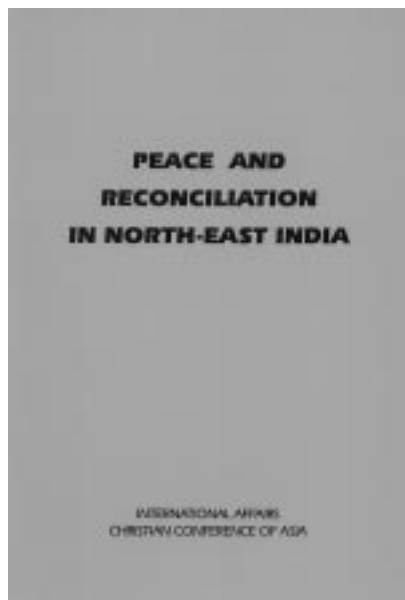
PROK News

New NCC Sri Lanka General Secretary

Rev. Ebenezer Joseph from the Kandy circuit of the Methodist Church of Sri Lanka has been appointed as the new General Secretary of NCC Sri Lanka.

Ebenezer Joseph is not new to the NCC as he served on the Commission for Justice and Peace of the NCC as its chairperson until 1995 and on other committees as well.

New Publications from CCA



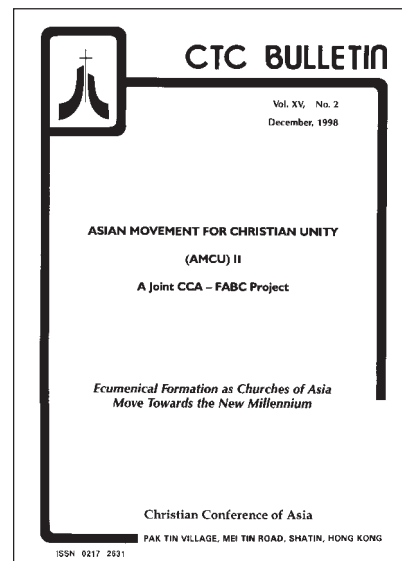
Peace and Reconciliation in North-East India
 edited by Mathews George Chunakara
 43 pages, US\$2
 Published by CCA International Affairs

India's north-eastern states have a distinct cultural and ethnic identity. Bounded by China, Myanmar, Bangladesh and Bhutan, and joined to the rest of India by the narrow corridor of the Assam link, the north-eastern region of India is gripped by turbulence. Ethnic conflicts and insurgency have taken their toll and virtually halted development in the region. This booklet contains two articles: a paper presented by Archbishop Menampampil at the CCA Consultation on 'The Ministry of Healing and Reconciliation in North-East India' and another paper by Dr Mohammad Taher, a well-known scholar and former professor of Guwahati University on 'People of North-East India'.

CTC Bulletin
 Vol. XV, No. 2, December 1998

This issue of the *CTC Bulletin* contains papers presented at the second Seminar on the Asian Movement for Christian Unity (AMCU II), a joint program of CCA and the FABC (Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences). The theme of the seminar, which was held in Bali in January 1998, was 'Ecumenical Formation as Churches of Asia Move towards the New Millennium'.

Edited jointly by Tomas Michel, SJ (FABC), and Henriette Hutabarat (CCA)



Spirituality of Struggle—Asian Women Artists in Dialogue with Ecumenical Decade of the Churches in Solidarity with Women
 33 pages, US\$5

Published by CCA Women's Concerns
 This small book shares with us the conversation held among a few women



artists and theologians in dialogue with the Ecumenical Decade of the Churches in Solidarity with Women. It contains Bible studies, personal and corporate theological reflections and various conversations expressed through paintings, poems and song.

www.cca.org.hk

Want instant facts and up-to-date information on the Christian Conference of Asia? CCA now has its own website—www.cca.org.hk.

Information regarding CCA can be accessed easily and quickly by people all over the world. Those who want a short introduction—what CCA is and what it does will find this material at their fingertips. The website already contains a great deal of information, for instance the names and addresses of all member councils and churches and related organisations. There are details of the structure of CCA and names and contact addresses of all officers, executive staff, members of committees, working groups and taskforces. There is also a short history of CCA and past office-bearers.

CCA News can also be found on the web. A selection of stories from this issue can be read on screen or kept for reference. This issue of CCA News (and those from last year) are also available in Acrobat pdf (portable document format) files, which means they can be downloaded from the website, and viewed on (or printed

from) any computer, exactly as published. If not already installed in your computer the Acrobat Reader program to enable this to be done can be downloaded free of

charge from the www.adobe.com website.

Forthcoming events are listed, and contact details.

Added recently is the liturgy for Asia Sunday 1999. These pages can be downloaded and printed out or photocopied for use in churches.

A website is never finished. We will be adding to it continually and updating information when we know about it. Your suggestions would be more than welcome.

If you see something that needs correcting, wish to suggest amendments or have ideas how the website could be improved or new ideas for inclusion, please let us know. Our e-mail address is cca@hk.super.net.

Geoff Alves

