



10 October 2024

## World Mental Health Day 2024 Message from Christian Conference of Asia "Mental Health at Work"

Faith, health, and healing remain central to God's divine grace and purpose for humanity. Health is more than just physical or mental well-being—it represents a wholeness that reflects God's promise, as seen in the life and message of Jesus Christ. This holistic understanding of health involves living in harmony with God, one another, and all creation.

Today, many individuals across both developing and developed countries face significant challenges in caring for their minds and bodies. According to global studies, mental disorders often emerge at a young age, either with or without any comorbidity, resulting in adverse socio-economic impacts. However, mental health has not been adequately addressed as a global health priority. Services for those affected by mental disorders remain underfunded and neglected, even though mental health is a universal human right.

The World Health Organization (WHO) estimates that nearly a billion people globally are living with a mental disorder. Depression has become increasingly common and can lead to tragic outcomes such as suicide. It is estimated that more than 726,000 people die by suicide every year. Asia accounts for roughly 60% of global suicides annually. According to the World Population Review, South Korea's suicide rate (28.6 per 100,000 people) is the highest among major advanced countries. Mongolia, Japan, Sri Lanka, India, Singapore, Pakistan, China, and Thailand are other Asian countries that exceed the global average of 9 per 100,000. This poses a serious mental health problem, and each suicide is a heartbreaking loss, leaving lasting impacts on families, communities, and nations.

Amidst the struggles we face in our lives, we hold onto the hope that those suffering from serious mental illnesses are never beyond the reach of God's healing. God extends peace, guidance, support, and love to every person created in His image.

As we observe World Mental Health Day 2024 on 10 October, with the theme "Mental Health at Work", the Christian Conference of Asia (CCA) emphasises the critical need to address mental health in every situation, especially in the workplace. Stigma and discrimination remain some of the greatest barriers to achieving mental well-being, especially in professional settings where vulnerability is often seen as a weakness. The fear of judgment, marginalisation, or career repercussions forces many people to suffer in silence, deepening their isolation and worsening their mental health.

In such situations, it is important to build strong support systems where individuals facing challenges feel secure, valued, and understood. Churches have a vital role to play, not only in advocating for mental health awareness but also in breaking down the barriers of stigma. By fostering environments of care and compassion, both at home and in the workplace, churches can help ensure that mental health is prioritised and people feel encouraged to seek help without fear.

The CCA reaffirms its commitment to addressing mental health across Asia and strengthening the Church's role in health and healing. Mental health remains a priority area in CCA's strategic programme initiatives for the coming years, focusing on advocacy, access to support, availability of mental health treatment facilities, and constant accompaniment for those who face mental health issues. CCA urges its member churches and councils to engage in open discussions, equip counsellors, train professionals, and motivate volunteers to offer support and accompaniment, ensuring that every person experiences holistic health—physical, mental, emotional, social, and spiritual.

Let Asian churches act collectively to advocate for creating supportive and caring spaces that will nurture mental health so that all may experience the fullness of life that God has intended.

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