

**"For We Are Neighbors"**



**Asia Sunday 2003**  
**Christian Conference of Asia**

## *For We Are Neighbors*

### Introduction

Asia Sunday is a special time for the churches in Asia to reflect together on our varied realities and ministries in the midst of such realities.

The theme of Asia Sunday 2003 is “For We Are Neighbors”, an appropriate affirmation of our hope and prayer to live together in peace with justice.

This booklet is a bit different from previous Asia Sunday booklets in terms of content, format and style. Instead of a full liturgy, we have a number of suggested components that churches can choose from and incorporate in their own liturgies.

In terms of focus, this year’s observance carries our continuing concern for interfaith cooperation. One way to foster this is through knowing and drawing from the wisdom sources of our various sacred books.

We encourage you to observe Asia Sunday 2003 in solidarity with Asian Christians and other believers in our quest for fullness of life and in our commitment towards living and serving as neighbors who are concerned about each other and of God’s world.

I am grateful to my colleagues for their efforts in producing this Asia Sunday 2003 booklet.

May the blessing of God be upon all who live out their calling to be neighbors with one another, despite all odds and difficulties.

Sincerely,

*AHN Jae Woong*  
General Secretary  
Christian Conference of Asia

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### **Acknowledgements**

## **I. An Invitation to Celebrate Asia Sunday**

Each year, the Christian Conference of Asia invites its member churches and councils as well as ecumenical partners to celebrate Asia Sunday. Since 1974, CCA has set aside the Sunday before Pentecost as Asia Sunday to commemorate the founding of the East Asian Christian Conference (EACC, now CCA) on 24<sup>th</sup> May 1959. Asia Sunday has been an occasion to focus on a theme that highlights one of CCA's major concerns. Celebrating Asia Sunday is therefore an act of solidarity in reflecting on and addressing a particular issue together.

Since Pentecost Sunday falls on 8<sup>th</sup> June 2003, Asia Sunday consequently falls on **1<sup>st</sup> June 2003**. However, churches are free to set aside any particular Sunday of their calendar year as Asia Sunday. For example, the Hong Kong Christian Council has scheduled it on 8<sup>th</sup> June 2003. It does not matter when it is scheduled – what is important is you set aside one Sunday each year to celebrate Asia Sunday as an act of solidarity with Asian churches in their various struggles, as well as in partnership with CCA and ownership of the life and work of the ecumenical movement in the region through CCA.

### ***Why this Theme?***

Asia is a most plural region. While this plurality can be a source of pride, it can also be a source of pain. The many conflicts going on in various parts of the region are very often caused by our inability to deal with plurality and diversity creatively.

Among the issues of plurality which have become walls of division are differences between ourselves and others in terms of faith, race, class, caste, gender, sexuality, health status, disability, age, regional background, educational background, employment status, political views, and what have you.

Thus, during Asia Sunday 2003, CCA would like to invite its member churches and councils, ecumenical partners and friends to think of ways of

- fostering inclusiveness,
  - reaching out,
    - breaking down barriers
      - crossing borders,
        - building bridges, and
          - closing the gaps—

*“for we are neighbors”* entrusted with God’s own creation and called by God to live together in the “whole household of God”, the oikoumene. The theme is put in the form of a prayer response, affirming that indeed we are neighbors regardless of our differences and that we are responsible for one another.

### ***The Format***

Unlike previous Asia Sunday booklets, we are not suggesting a full liturgy for Asia Sunday 2003. Instead, we are giving you some ideas and suggestions of what can possibly go into your liturgies and how you might celebrate Asia Sunday, not only liturgically but also educationally. We know that many churches have their own liturgical formats to follow and we do respect that. Hence, we hope that these ideas and suggestions will serve as seeds for your own planning and celebration of Asia Sunday. Feel free to use what you can and create better ones.

We have planned the materials for Asia Sunday 2003 in a way that they can be easily downloaded from the CCA website. This is in response to several requests from member churches and councils who find downloading a copy much faster and easier.

### ***Towards Dialogue and Inclusivity***

As Christians, we are accustomed to using our own Scriptures in worship and study. As an attempt to venture into interreligious dialogue during this special Sunday, we have incorporated some quotations from the sacred writings of other religious groups. Please feel free to use or skip these according to what is most sensitive to your own context or situation. It would be important to discuss your plans with the worship committee and to use this occasion as an educational experience of the many ways of recognizing God, the Divine, even through other sacred writings or teachings. Among the other sacred writings referred to are: the Holy Quran (Islam), the Upanishad, Bhagavad Gita and Yajur Veda (Hinduism), the Analects (Confucianism). Another way to incorporate dialogue and ensure inclusivity is to invite someone from another faith community in your locality to give a greeting during the service. This is very ideal especially if your congregation has had meaningful relationship with the other faith community in your area.

Furthermore, as an attempt at inclusivity, we also suggest that leadership in the service be shared with children, youth and adults (women and men). After all, God’s hospitality is so lavish that each one is valued dearly.

### ***Invitation for Special Offering***

During Asia Sunday, we encourage churches to make special offerings, which will be set aside for a particular cause. This year, in line with the theme “For We Are Neighbors,” we would like to give the offering to a fund to assist the families of those who have suffered in recent attacks in Pakistan and those who are wrongfully accused of contravening the blasphemy laws and their families. You may send your offerings to the CCA (see p.35 for details) and CCA will forward them to the appropriate body in Pakistan.

### ***Requests for Translation, Distribution and Feedback***

We would like to invite member councils and churches to translate this material for use in your local languages or dialects. Please disseminate it widely to your local churches. After your celebration of Asia Sunday 2003, we also invite you to share with us about what you did; whether the material has been useful to you; and what your suggestions are for the next year’s observance.

## **II. Liturgical Ideas**

### ***The Worship Center***

Preparing the worship center is important in order to create an ambience that also speaks to the theme. Here are possible ways to create an ambience that might help depict the theme:

1. Having symbols from different cultures and faith groups in Asia would help. A most common symbol that cuts across religions is the lamp and lighting the lamp can be given new meanings in view of our theme – e.g. it symbolizes the splendour of God or the divine; it stands for truth and vision; it is a prayer for light or illumination; it is a free gift for all.
2. Products or things depicting diversity in races, colors, languages, cultures and religions in Asia could be displayed. This is to celebrate and affirm God's gift of variety and plurality. That such diversity is manifest in creation is proof that God loves plurality.
3. Something to depict walls of division and hostility can also dramatize the present reality of conflict, enmity, separation, hostility. It can be a wall drawn on a big paper or cardboard; or a wall made of children's blocks; or a piece of wire mesh; etc. Acts of overcoming such division can be built into the worship – say, during the children's or family time, the act of confession, or the act of commitment in response to the sermon or homily.

### ***Calls to Worship***

(1)

Child:	The world belongs to God;
All:	the earth and all its people.
Male:	How good and lovely it is
All:	to live together in harmony.
Female:	Love and faith, justice and peace,
All:	they come together.
Child:	If we keep silent,
All:	the stones would cry out.
Adults:	Creator God, open our lips.
All:	and our mouth shall proclaim your praise.

*(2) Based on John 3 and 4 of the Holy Bible*

- One: Sisters and Brothers, the time is coming and has now come when the true worshippers will worship God in spirit and in truth.
- All: God is Spirit and God's worshippers must worship in spirit and in truth.
- One: But who are the true worshippers who worship God in spirit and in truth?
- All: The wind blows where it wills and you hear the sound of it, but you do not know whence it comes or whether it goes; so it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit.

*(3) Call to Worship*

- Male: Hear O Israel, the Lord our God is One. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your might. (Deuteronomy 4:4ff.)
- All: In the name of God, the Beneficent, the Merciful. Praise be to God, Lord of the Worlds, the Beneficent, the Merciful, Owner of the Day of Judgment. Thee alone we worship; Thee alone we ask for help. Show us the straight path: the path of those whom Thou has favoured; not of those who earn Thine anger nor of those who go astray. (Quran 1: The Fatihah)
- Female: The Lord says, "I will make a new covenant written on your hearts – when I will be your God and you will be my people." (Jeremiah 31:31, 33)
- All: God is the one God, hidden in all beings, all-pervading, the Self within all beings, watching over all works, dwelling in all beings, the witness, the perceiver, the only one, free from qualities. (Svetasvatara Upanishad 6:11)

***The Eucharist***

In keeping with the theme of God's open hospitality, a fitting image to use in celebrating the Eucharist would be the feeding of the five thousand. Here are sample parts of what can be done:

- Invitation:* People of God, come. Come out of your separateness and division. Come and enter into unity with one another through the sharing of this meal. Come confessing all that separates us from God and each other.
- Confession:* Gracious God, source of all that we are, we confess to you our failures to live as neighbors in this world which you have entrusted to us. We close our ears and eyes to those we consider "other" to us. Our hearts are numbed to voices and sight of pain and suffering. Our vision of your open

hospitality is impaired by our pride of nation, race, religion or denomination. Forgive us and fill us with your humility and compassion. Renew in us the vision of your lavish hospitality, which we symbolize through the sharing of the bread and wine.

*Assurance*

*Consecration:* Eternal God, we praise and give you thanks for your great love which embraces all peoples and nations. We thank you for Christ Jesus who broke down walls of hostility through his life and ministry. As we celebrate this meal in memory of him, we ask that you make it and those who partake of it sacred. Consecrate us so that as we share the broken bread we may recall how like the grains gathered from the hillsides, we can become one loaf; and like the poured out wine we may remember how our lives are to be poured out in humility and compassion.

*Institution:* Jesus was teaching the crowds – more than five thousand of them – about the reign of God, when his disciples asked him to send the crowds to find their food. Jesus said, “You give them something to eat.” Taking five loaves of bread and two fish which the disciples found, Jesus looked up to heaven, gave thanks and broke them, then gave them to all people. For no one is excluded from the hospitality of God.

*(while breaking the bread)* Through the broken bread, we participate in the body of Christ, broken in love for all people. Eat this, all of you.

*(while lifting the cup)* Through the poured out wine, we participate in the new life Christ gives. Drink this, all of you.

Come now for God’s table is open and free.

*Distribution of Elements*

*Thanksgiving:* Gracious God, we give you thanks for this meal that has symbolized for us your open hospitality. Our communion together manifests the vision of unity that is all possible in spite of our differences. Empower us to live our lives in celebration of your hospitality by living together as neighbors in the world community. [HSA]

## *Prayers and Litanies*

### *Invocation or Prayer of Approach*

- Male: Spirit of the living God, fall afresh on us. As we gather in this place, allow your spirit to fill our very being.
- All: As we worship today, we remember our brothers and sisters who worship in other ways, in other places, at other times. Inspire each of us to work more faithfully for justice and dignity of life everywhere.
- Female: Raise our vision above the barriers of color, culture, creed, and all that separate us. Give us wisdom as we deal with one another; help us to recognize and respect different ways, rather than judge.
- All: In the spirit of Jesus who came not to be served but to serve, we now must walk in the world as friends and neighbors, reaching out our hands with help and opening our hearts in love. Awake in us the desire to seek your ways of serving your people in the world.

### *Responsive Confession*

- Male: Let us now look into ourselves and see where we have fallen short of God's will for us to live in harmony, justice and peace with one another.
- All: We confess our participation in all that has caused our disunity, conflicts, separation and brokenness from one another.
- Female: We come from a world where people are judged by their skin color, ethnic background, gender, sexual orientation, economic status, political conviction, religious affiliation. We come from a world where people are lumped together by external likenesses, where people are accepted or rejected because of particularities of their personal or group identity.
- All: We seek a different vision of life. We seek a more inclusive community, a more expansive welcome, a more holy hospitality for all people. We confess, O Sacred One, that we are part of the problem. We acknowledge that we mirror in ourselves the fragmentation of the world around us. We have been influenced by its values and well trained in its patterns of thought and action. We are immersed in its subtle oppressions as well as its blatant acts of injustice. Even without knowing it, our lives have been polluted by popular opinion and shaped by cultural rituals and routines. We seek a cleansing of our souls. We seek a softening of our hearts. We seek to be saturated in your love. We seek to

live in the authentic community of the Christ, in whose name we pray.

(3) *Unison Confession*

Caring and compassionate Creator, we have come together, to celebrate your gift of variety and diversity. Yet, we have failed to acknowledge that and to be grateful for that. Instead, we have failed to see you in other places. We have ignored your beauty around us, in earth and sky, in plants and creatures. We always claim that you made us in your own image, but we have also failed to see your own image in other peoples' faces, even in the people who surround us. Hence, we find ourselves separated from our sisters and brothers. We have drawn lines between us that are based on color, race, social and economic status, ideological positions, religious affiliations, gender, sexual orientation, age, ability, among other things. O God, our liberation, we seek the power of your Spirit, that we may learn to live in fuller union with you and our sisters and brothers. Grant us the courage to love and to act that we may begin to affirm your very own image in one another.

(4) *Commitment or Dedication*

Creator God, we believe that you have created all the nations of the world to live together in peace, sharing their riches, enjoying their diverse languages, cultures and colors, and caring for one another's need. Grant us the wisdom and the courage to break down all the walls that we ourselves built to separate us one from another. Empower us to rid ourselves of selfishness, indifference, intolerance and hate. Fill us with your glorious vision that springs from our common beginning as human beings created in your image and points to our common goal as your renewed creation.

(5) *A Litany on Neighborliness*

One: Enable us to foster inclusivity in our thinking and relating with the other;

All: *For we are neighbors* created in your own image.

One: Enable us to challenge and critique our exclusivist tendencies that set us apart from those who are other to us – because of class, caste, race, religion, gender, sexual orientation, theology, ideology and anything that separates us one from another;

All: *For we are neighbors* called to celebrate community even in diversity.

One: Equip us to reach out to the other in love despite hostility and enmity;  
 All: *For we are neighbors* called to live in peace and harmony.  
 One: Empower us to break down barriers that have separated us from each other;  
 All: *For we are neighbors* called to live in peace with justice together.  
 One: Enliven us to cross borders and build bridges of friendship and partnership;  
 All: *For we are neighbors* called to mirror your likeness.

[HSA]

### ***Drama on Neighborliness***

This can be done during the reading of a chosen scripture passage (choose from suggested ideas for Bible study, sermon, Sunday School). Or, it can be done as part of the message, an acted message to be followed by a short reflection or homily. You may wish to contextualize the biblical story by highlighting the contemporary “others” in your context (e.g. migrant workers, refugees, internally displaced persons, children, people with HIV/AIDS, etc.). Drama, role-play, and pantomime are good ways to involve young people, children and other social groups.

### ***Blessings and Sending Forth***

(1) *This may be acted out:*

Go in peace as neighbors, treating each other with love and respect, regardless of color or creed. May the only time we look down upon others be when we bend down to lift them up, saying, “For we are neighbors.”

*(Revised from an African American blessing by HSA)*

(2)

Youth: Beloved, let us love one another; for love is of God; and they who love are born of God and know God. They who do not love do not know God; for God is love. (I John 4:7)

All: They who respond to the joys and sorrows of others as if they were their own have attained the highest state of spiritual union. (Bhagavad Gita)

Adults: They whose hearts are in the smallest degree set upon Goodness will dislike no one. (Analects 4:4)

All: Strong One, make me strong.  
 May all beings look on me with the eye of friend!  
 May I look on all beings with the eye of friend!  
 May we look on one another with the eye of friend!  
*(Yajur Veda 36:18)*

(3)

Leader:

You were created as different nations and tribes,  
Not that you should despise one another,  
But that you should learn from one another. (Quran, Sura  
49)  
Go, therefore, to learn and serve each other,  
and to be a blessing to one another.

### **III. Ideas for Bible Study, Sermon, Sunday School Lesson**

#### **(1) *Being Neighbors***

One of Jesus' teachings that directly speak on being neighbors is the parable of the Good Samaritan (**Luke 10:30-37**). Jesus told the story in reply to the question "who is my neighbor" that one should love as oneself. Instead of defining who is a neighbor or what makes one a neighbor, Jesus tells a story about five kinds of people.

First, there is a person, a traveler, about whom we know nothing except that he becomes the victim of robbery and attack. He is stripped, beaten up and left half dead. This person represents those in society who are victims of injustice and are made to *live as no-people*.

Second, there is the robber who strategises and waits for a prey – he attacks the other, robs them of life and dignity, and enjoys the stolen wealth. This person represents those in society who cause injustice and suffering to others. They *live against people*.

Third, there is the priest who goes down that road but when he sees the man, he walks on the other side.

Fourth, there is the Levite who also comes along, goes over and looks at the victim, then walks on the other side. Both of them represent those in society who are highly regarded, have some social, political, economic, or religious power, but who *live away from people*.

Finally, there is the Samaritan who, upon seeing the victim, is filled with compassion. He goes over to him, pours oil and wine on his wounds and bandages them, then takes him to an inn, and cares for him. This Samaritan illustrates neighborliness and represents for us today those who truly *live with people*.

The striking thing about this story is that the Samaritan, who was the despised "other," looked down by the majority of the people, now becomes the epitome of neighborliness – which involves crossing and breaking down barriers, reaching out in compassion and love, sharing life in its fullness with someone who has been deprived, and empowering the other to live life abundantly. [Summarized from a sermon by Hope S. Antone]

#### **(2) *Overcoming Barriers***

The story of the Canaanite woman (Matthew 15:21-28) or Syrophenician woman (Mark 7: 24-30) is one of few stories where we see Jesus accepting

and praising a Gentile outsider. It however began with what seems to be a pitiless and even harsh behavior towards the woman who called him by a messianic title – Son of David – and who pleaded for help for her sick daughter.

Being a Canaanite, she is a descendant of those tribes with whom the Israelites were not to associate when they reached the Promised Land. Being a Gentile woman, it was deemed most unlikely for her to be speaking loudly to a man, and a Jew at that. As the disciples begged him to send her away, Jesus replied that his mission was primarily to Israel. However, she persisted and fell prostrate before him. Jesus told her he could not help as his food was for the children (metaphor for people of Israel) and not for the dogs (metaphor for Gentiles) – to which she replied that even dogs would settle for a few crumbs.

The woman's act is a good example of interfaith relations. She was willing to give up her pride for the sake of a greater cause (i. e. healing of her child). She showed humility, persistence and great faith. Such a demonstration of faith surprised and touched Jesus. When Jesus said, "Woman, great is your faith," he did not qualify it as "great is your *Christian* faith". Thus, people of other faiths are also capable of deep faith. This is a story of how a Gentile woman, considered an outsider by virtue of her race, religion and gender, dared to break down the wall of hostility between Jews and other people. In the process, her daring act also led to an expansion of Jesus' own horizon.

[Summarized from a Bible study by Hope S. Antone]

### **(3) *Interfaith Life and Living***

The Old Testament is the story of ancient Jewish people whose self-understanding, understanding of God and the world slowly moved from primitive tribalism, to particularism, to universalism. At very crucial moments of their history, they took an interreligious position as they borrowed and learned from other cultures and religions. Their life of wandering, migration, slavery, and captivity exposed them to different life-orientations and diverse belief systems. It was a good interreligious and intercultural experience. But they maintained their unique faith and extraordinary lifestyle.

In the New Testament, early Jewish Christians had to learn to overcome their fundamental religious bias against the Gentiles. Among the controversial issues was circumcision, which divided the early Church. In **Acts 15:19**, James said: "It is my opinion that we should not trouble the Gentiles who are turning to God." This shows how the early apostles were willing to set aside their long-cherished practises and customs to break

down barriers, cross into new territory, and reach new frontiers of understanding.

In **Acts 17:16-28**, we hear Paul entering into a serious dialogue with the Athenians who professed different faith and worldviews. Starting where the people were, he established links and built an interreligious bridge. Hence, he did not reject them or exclude them from the economy of God's salvation. He made a strong theological affirmation, mentioning explicitly that God is one, who is Lord of heaven and earth. He sought to demonstrate the unity or harmony of religions based on ethical monotheism. With respect for the people who belonged to a different faith-affiliation, he declared the good news without offending, insulting or humiliating his audience. He preached on their request; but he knew them well enough to be able to say something starting with where they were coming from. This is authentic inter-faith life and living.

For the Gospel according to John (**John 1:14, 14:16; 15:26**), God entered into a direct dialogue with humanity – dialogue not through words but the Word made flesh – i.e. real, concrete and particularised. John spoke of the Holy Spirit, or Paraklete, which could not be confined to Christianity alone (**John 3:8**). The Paraklete is beyond and above Christianity – so pervasive and all encompassing, all embracing and hence, available to all religions.

There is a direct and indirect indication of plurality of religions in the Bible, that it would be problematic to make Christ captive in Christianity. God is at work in all religions, cultures and histories. We cannot restrict God's action in the world.

### ***Questions for Group Discussions:***

Have you tried to make friends with people of other faiths? Have you tried to know them deeply in terms of their faith-affirmations? What are the privileges and problems of such a venture?

How do your pastor and congregation respond to an inter-faith dialogue and living? Have your congregation and pastor invited leaders of other faiths in your church to listen and learn from them?

How does your church look at inter-faith marriage? Do they permit solemnizing such a marriage in your church? Why or why not?

[Summarized from "Interfaith Life and Living," in *Reclaiming the Cross* by Somen Das (Hong Kong: CCA-WSCF AP, 2000), pp. 80-92.]

#### **(4) *The Spirit Blows Where It Wills***

Text: Acts 10:1-11:18

The story of Cornelius stresses the noteworthy piety of someone who is an “other” to the Jews. Cornelius must have been a religious man who heard about the way the Jews worshipped God. His prayers and charitable deeds were described as having ascended as a “memorial” before God.

Before Cornelius was converted, Peter had to undergo a radical transformation to accept all creatures as creatures of God. Peter had to learn that stipulations set by religious traditions were not boundaries within which the activity of God takes place. No one can be a witness in a religiously plural world without going through a similar experience: to look at “others” as God looks at them. Cornelius is a good lesson for those who speak of “unreached people”... We do not go to the people because they have not known God. God is already at work in the midst of/for/with them.

[Summarized from Daniel Thiagarajah’s paper “The Spirit Blows Where It Wills: Witnessing Our Faith in a Multi-Religious Context,” Oct. 21-26, 1999].

#### **(5) *Becoming Jesus to the Poor***

Text: Matthew 25:31-45

What the poor need today is not only a place to live but respect, equality and love that will not be diminished by their status, clothing or even their smell. They really don’t like to hear about Jesus because they’ve heard about him so often. Some street sleepers can tell me a full version of the Gospel. What they actually need is a friend who can walk with them, share with them and have a sense of family. Behind all this is an unconditional love.

To love humankind is easy but to love a person is very difficult. Why? It is the real test of love. We really hope that Christians can be the ones who love with all their hearts and all their strength. The poor don’t want to just hear about Jesus but to see Jesus as he is proclaimed by Christians. Where can they find Jesus? Actually we are a little Jesus. We should tell the poor bravely and honestly, “My friend, I am the Jesus you want to see.”

[Excerpted from Daniel Tse’s “A Christian’s Personal Reflection on Poverty,” in *Portraits of the Son: The Story of the Poor in Hong Kong*, HKCC, 2000]

## **IV. Stories and Quotes on Breaking Down Walls of Hostility**

### ***(1) Creating Safe Spaces***

In Japan, there are many people who live without choices – migrant workers without visas and who bring up children without nationality and without identity; the Ainu people, the Okinawa people, the Burakumin, the Koreans, victims of violence, children forced to survive a very competitive school system, children who suffer from strong social pressure and nurture a deep sense of despair.

I want to be a Christian education worker to be with them, to listen to their voices, to make a way for other teachers to realize that these are people and not problems in society. I want to be able to create space where people feel safe. I want to find those small spaces in society which could give energy and hope. I believe that the church could be a safe space that could offer small spaces everywhere because the church is everywhere. The church has big possibility. [Kaori Oshima from Japan]

### ***(2) Childhood Experience of Interreligious Living***

My father who was a Hindu by birth was converted to Christianity by a missionary from Germany. His siblings are still practising Hindus. My mother belonged to a Christian family, which had its roots in Portuguese culture. During my childhood, my family lived in a predominantly Hindu locality... I was the only Christian child among the many children who participated in the *puja* (worship at the Rama's shrine, which was closest to our house), singing, clapping hands and dancing. My main interest, apart from being in my peer group, was the *prasadam* (food offered to the gods then offered to the people) that was distributed to all the participants at the end of the *puja*... Though my father was from a Hindu background he did not approve of my participation in the Hindu worship and I was punished by my mother for such unchristian behaviour! But I had my own ways of escaping from the wrath of my parents. Whatever my parents said or did to keep me away from the "pagan" influence of my friends made no sense to me at all. I continued to be part of all the *pujas* and festivals conducted in my neighbourhood. I was a child then seeped in the innocence of childhood. I learnt a great deal about the religion, myths, symbols and rituals of the faith of my neighbours. I was one with them.

[Samson Prabhakar from India]

### ***(3) "Not Without My Neighbour"***

As children, we played with the Hindu children, went to school with them, and in keeping with the practice in Asia we were in and out of each other's

homes at all times of the day. In fact, our next-door Hindu neighbours' two children regularly joined us in our evening family prayers. The prayers were elaborate affairs in those days, with singing of lyrics and choruses, Bible reading and two or three persons, including children, offering the petitions. The Hindu children loved it, and our neighbours were happy that their children joined us for prayers. Often some of us from the Christian home would be at our neighbours' when they had their *pujas* (the Hindu prayers) and sang the *tevarams* (devotional songs) in the evenings.

...As I grew up and began to understand religious matters, I became aware of the differences between Christianity and Hinduism and why we were Christians and not Hindus. But I also became aware that our neighbours were a devout family and that their prayer life was for them profoundly meaningful. Perhaps what impressed me most was that their prayer life appeared to bear fruits. They were an ethically conscious family. They extended warm and loving friendship to us, their neighbours. The fact that we were not Hindus made no difference in their attitude towards us. We were as much their children as their own. And this attitude of openness and friendship extended to others in the neighbourhood as well. Long before I learned theology, and was able to articulate religious matters, I had come to think of them as a family rooted in God's love.

...*Not Without My Neighbour*... represents not only my struggle, but the dilemma of many Christians in Asia who live among neighbours of other faiths, and sense in the life of those neighbours something of what is conveyed by the phrase "life in God." Often their relationships are so close and their perception of the spiritual life of the 'other' is such that they do not want to be in 'heaven' to which their neighbours are denied admission. It is for them, as it is for me, a moral dilemma.

[From the book *Not Without My Neighbour* by S. Wesley Ariarajah (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1999).]

#### **(4) *Islamic Teachings on Peace, Forgiveness and Struggle***

Islam calls upon Muslims to exercise patience and tolerance, towards even those who may have caused them injury in the past. The Qur'an says: "Be quick in the race for forgiveness from your Lord, and for a garden wide as the heavens and earth, prepared for the righteous, those who spend whether in prosperity or adversity, who restrain anger and pardon all people; for God loves those who do good." (3:133-34)

Literally, jihad means struggle. In Islam, there is an internal struggle which precedes any external struggle. The internal struggle is the effort of a Muslim to conform their lives to the five basic pillars of Islam. Without the

completion of the inner struggles, there can be no outer struggle -- one to explain and convey the message of Islam to the world. It is important to note that the external struggle is not about war, but about conveying the message of Islam peacefully. In order to do that, the messenger, a Muslim, must know their own religion.

Every day, in every greeting, Muslims say to one another “Assalaamu-alaikum,” which means “Peace be upon you.” Islam means “submission” and a Muslim is “one who submits”, but these words come from the same root as “Salaam” (peace). [From <http://www.matusa.org/faq.asp>]

### **(5) Dialogue**

Dialogue is an attempt not to gloss over but to go deeper into the issues that divide people, causing disharmony and conflict. It is based on the belief that confrontation and conflict will not resolve but only further alienate people from each other. It builds on the experience that many of the conflicts feed on ignorance and prejudice, and that an informed understanding of one’s neighbour’s perspective and experience is an important component of living in community. Dialogue can also help us to identify and expose the social, economic and political forces that manipulate and abuse our religious sentiments in order to keep us apart or even in conflict for the advancement of selfish ends.

[From the book entitled *Not Without My Neighbour* by S. Wesley Ariarajah (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1999).]

### **(6) Buddhist Teachings on Peace and Dialogue**

People kill and are killed because they cling too tightly to their own beliefs and ideologies. When we believe that ours is the only faith that contains the truth, violence and suffering will surely be the result. The second precept of the Order of Interbeing, founded within the Zen Buddhist tradition during the war in Vietnam, is about letting go of views: “Do not think the knowledge you presently possess is changeless, absolute truth. Avoid being narrow-minded and bound to present views. Learn and practice nonattachment from views in order to be open to receive others’ viewpoints.” To me, this is the most essential practice of peace.

...my path to discovering Jesus as one of my spiritual ancestors was not easy. The colonization of my country by the French was deeply connected with the efforts of the Christian missionaries... It was only later, through friendships with Christian men and women who truly embody the spirit of understanding and compassion of Jesus, that I have been able to touch the depths of Christianity... When you touch someone who authentically

represents a tradition, you not only touch his or her tradition, you also touch your own. This quality is essential for dialogue.

[From Thich Nhat Hanh's *Living Buddha, Living Christ* (New York: Riverhead Books, 1995).]

### **(7) *Principles for Better Interfaith Relations***

1. We confess our failures and lack of love, respect and sensitivity to people of other faiths in the past. We intend to forgive one another, seek the forgiveness of others and commit ourselves to a new beginning.
2. We affirm that good interfaith relations can open the way to better interethnic relations and peace throughout the world.
3. We recognise building true community (*koinonia*), both among persons and various ethnic and religious communities, as our primary objective. We need to develop a global theology that will be appropriate for the unfolding sense of a globalised world.
4. We affirm the importance of promoting a culture of dialogue within and among all religious communities and indigenous traditions.
5. We condemn violence and terrorism as being against the spirit of all true religion and we pledge ourselves to removing their causes.
6. We shall respect the integrity of all religions and ensure that they have the freedom to follow their own beliefs and practices.
7. We believe that the different religions are enriched by identifying agendas in which they can collaborate, such as making peace, protecting the environment, eradicating poverty and ensuring the human dignity of all.
8. We affirm that it is important for us all to listen to and learn from other religions so that we can value religious plurality as a factor that enriches our communities.
9. We endeavor to live out and explain the truths of our own religion in a manner that is intelligible and friendly to people of other faiths.
10. Cultural diversity as well as religious diversity in our communities will be affirmed as a source of enrichment and challenge.

[Prepared by the Rt Rev. Kenneth Fernando for the Network of Interfaith Concerns of the Anglican Communion]

### **(8) *Principles for Establishing a Culture of Peace in Asia***

1. We need to discover creative ways of dealing with past/historical grievances. This implies recognising the wrongs that have been done and dealing with them in such a way that they do not take away our future.

2. We need to learn new ways of celebrating pluralism. We must rise above seeing the other as enemy/threat. The other is one who can enrich my life.
3. There must be a just sharing of political power. Issues over how large or small we are, or who arrived first, must give way to the rightful belonging of all, and the right of all to participate in shaping our political future.
4. We need to discover civilised ways of handling disagreements. There will be disagreements but we need not kill each other for this. The best way to handle differences is to talk and work for compromise.

[Taken from Rev. Duleep de Chickera's presentation, "The Ecumenical Response in Building a Culture of Peace," during the CCA youth workshop on Religious and Ethnic Plurality in South and South East Asia, 2000, in Sri Lanka.]

## V. Suggested Songs and Hymns

### It Could Be A Wonderful World

The musical score is written in treble clef with a key signature of one flat (Bb) and a 4/4 time signature. It consists of six staves of music with lyrics written below the notes. The lyrics are: "If each lit-tle child could have fresh milk each day, If If there were no poor and the rich were con-tent, If each work-ing man have e-nough time to play If each home-less per-son have strong-ers were wel-come where-ever they went If eve-ry-one knew what com-some place to stay It could be a won-der-ful world. mu-ni-ty meant It could be a won-der-ful world. If we could con-si-der each oth-er: A neigh-bor, friend, sis-ter or brother It could be a won-der-ful, won-der-ful world, It could be a won-der-ful world."

If each lit-tle child could have fresh milk each day, If  
If there were no poor and the rich were con-tent, If  
each work-ing man have e-nough time to play If each home-less per-son have  
strong-ers were wel-come where-ever they went If eve-ry-one knew what com-  
some place to stay It could be a won-der-ful world.  
mu-ni-ty meant It could be a won-der-ful world.  
If we could con-si-der each oth-er: A  
neigh-bor, friend, sis-ter or brother It could be a won-der-ful,  
won-der-ful world, It could be a won-der-ful world.

# Walls That Divide

Words by Walter Farquharson, adpt.

Music by Ren Klusmeier

The musical score is written in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a 4/4 time signature. It consists of four systems of music, each with a vocal line and a guitar accompaniment line. The lyrics are written below the vocal line, and guitar chords are indicated above the guitar line. The chords include D, F#m/C#bass, Bm7, D/A, G, F, D/F#, G/A, A, Bm7, A7, D, F#m/C#, Bm, D/A, F#m, F#m, G, G/A, A7, D, F, E7, D7, and F#m.

1. Though an-cient walls — may still — stand proud —  
 2. When vest-ed power — stands firm — en-trenched  
 3. The truth we seek — in var- — ied scheme, —  
 4. The church di-vid — ed seeks — that grace, —

and ra-cial strife — be fact, —  
 and breaks the bur — den'd back, —  
 the life that we — pur-sue, —  
 that new-ness we — pro-claim, —

though bound-ries may — be lines — of hate, —  
 when waste and want — live side — by side, —  
 u-nites us in — a com- — mon quest —  
 A u-ni-ty — of serv- — ing love —

Pro-claim God's — sav-ing act. —  
 it's gas-pel — that we lack! —  
 for self and — world made new —  
 that lives praise — to God's name. —

5 This broken world seeks lasting health and vital unity, God's people, by God's word renewed, Cast off all slavery! (refrain)

Walls that di- vide are bro - ken down,

Christ is our u - ni - ty!

Chains that en - slave are thrown a - side Christ is our

lib - er - ty!

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EPIPHANY SEASON

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✓ God of Change and Glory

1 Cor. 12:4-27

Al Carmine, 1973

1 God of change and glo - ry, God of time and space,  
 2 God of man - y col - ors, God of man - y signs,  
 3 Fresh-ness of the morn - ing, new - ness of, each night,

when we fear the fu - ture, give to us your grace,  
 you have made us dif - ferent, bless - ing man - y kinds,  
 you are still cre - at - ing end - less love and light.

In the midst of chang-ing ways give us still the grace to praise,  
 As the old ways dis - ap - pear, let your love cast out our fear,  
 This we see, as shad - ows part, man - y gifts from one great heart.

*Refrain*

Man - y gifts, one Spir - it, one love known in man - y ways.

... God of Change and Glory (cont'd.)

The musical score consists of three systems of music, each with a vocal line and a piano accompaniment line. The first system has a vocal line with lyrics 'In our dif - fer - ence is bless-ing, from di - ver - si - ty we praise' and a piano accompaniment with chords C, F, C, F, G. The second system has a vocal line with lyrics 'one Giv-er, one Word, one Spir-it, one God known in man-y ways,' and a piano accompaniment with chords C, F, G. The third system has a vocal line with lyrics 'hal-low-ing our days. For the Giv-er, for the gifts, praise, praise, praise!' and a piano accompaniment with chords F, C, G7, C.

*Al Carmines, composer, playwright, performer, and teacher, has served as minister for two United Church of Christ congregations in New York City. This hymn, commissioned in 1973, was one of the first modern texts to claim diversity as a gift from God.*

Tune: KATHERINE 6.5.6.5.7.  
*Al Carmines, 1973*

FRIEND TO FRIEND

**Introduction** (♩ = 76)

**1.** Let us now as God's own peo-ple, give the sign of peace, pro -

claim - ing our love for one an - oth - er, bind - ing friend to friend.

**Refrain**

Christ Je-sus calls us to love one an-oth - er, to be one in him,

friend to friend, in love to each oth - er, we shall give our hands.

*Fine*

...Friend to Friend (cont'd)

2. In our care for one an - oth - er, by each kind - ly word, by

ev - ery lov - ing deed, we make known the love of Je - sus Christ.

3. We feed the hung - ry, clothe the na - ked, give drink to those who thirst, for

Je - sus came in love as a ser - vant, and we fol - low him.

Weds: Eduardo P. Hontiveros, Philippines  
Mus: FRIEND; Eduardo P. Hontiveros, Philippines

I John 4:7; John 13:34-35; Matthew 25:35-36

# When I needed a neighbour

Words: Sydney Carter  
 Music: Sydney Carter, harmonised by J. Farmer

Verse - Unison Em C

1. When I need - ed a neigh - bour, were you  
 there, were you there? When I need - ed a neigh - bour, were you  
 there? And the creed and the co - lour and the  
 name won't mat - ter, were you there?  
 (Last verse) I'll be there.

Chords: G, B, B7, Em, C, Em7, Am, Refrain D7, G, Em, 1-6. Em, Em Last verse

- |                                 |  |
|---------------------------------|--|
| 2. I was hungry and thirsty ... | 5. When I needed a healer ...  |
| 3. I was cold, I was naked ...  | 6. When they put me in prison ...  |
| 4. When I needed a shelter ...  | 7. Wherever you travel, I'll be there,<br>I'll be there,<br>wherever you travel, I'll be there ... |

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## VI. Pew Sheets for Children

### **Word Search Puzzle**

The puzzle contains words that have to do with being neighbors and what neighbors do to each other.

C C O M M U N I T Y E S  
Y G J O H B E A R V H N  
E B E A L L Y T O A O E  
C P F F A M I L I E S C  
O P A R T N E R S P P O  
N N E I G H B O R S I O  
C A R E T E L P E U T P  
E L I N W A H E L P A E  
R R A D A L G N S P L R  
N B A S H A R E D O I A  
C O M M U N I O N R T T  
S S O L I D A R I T Y E

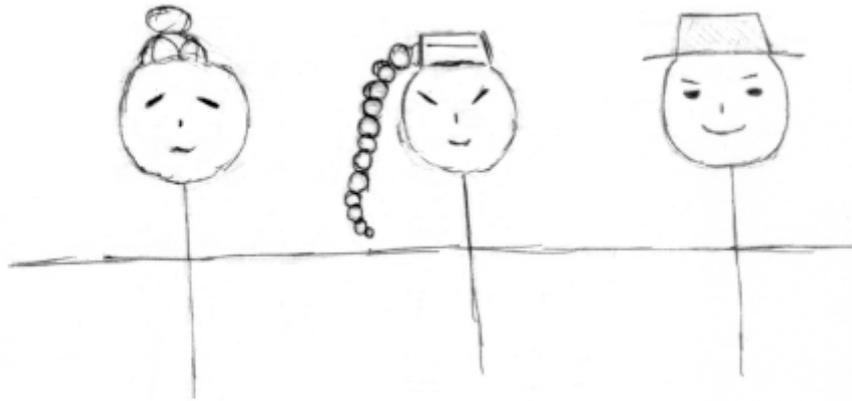
### ***Word List:***

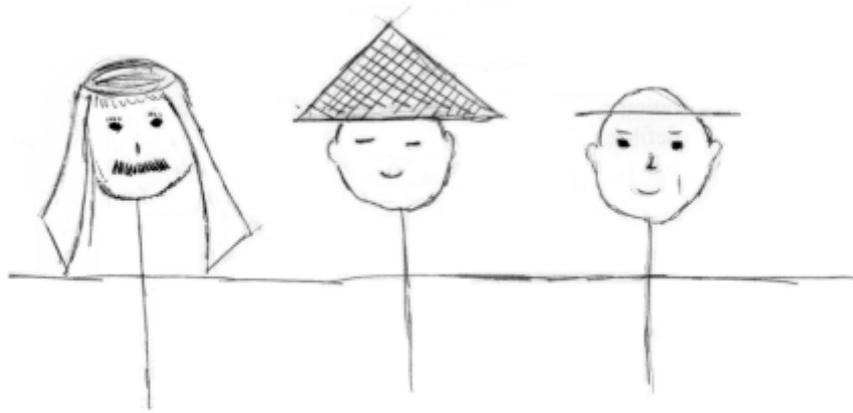
FAMILIES, PARTNERS, NEIGHBORS, FRIENDS, COMMUNITY, SOLIDARITY, ALLY, COMMUNION, HOSPITALITY, CARE, SHARE, HELP, SUPPORT, COOPERATE, LOVE, CONCERN, OPEN, AID, HEAL, BEAR

### ***Additional Challenge:***

Use the words in sentences that show neighborliness.

Add faces to the following drawing. They may be faces of people in your community/neighborhood not represented here. Add clothes to represent their cultures, races or religions. Then color the picture.





## **VII. Background Notes on Pakistan's Blasphemy Law**

The law on blasphemy has existed in Pakistan since 1927. But it was hardly used until the vague and arbitrary definition of blasphemy was inserted into the Pakistan Penal Code in the 1980s. Amendment Act No. III of 1986 amended Section 295-C to read: "Use of derogatory remarks, etc. in respect of the Holy Prophet (PBUH): Whoever by words, either spoken or written, or by visible representation or by any imputation, innuendo or insinuation, directly or indirectly, defiles the sacred name of the Holy Prophet (PBUH), shall be punished with the death sentence or imprisonment for life and shall be liable to fine'." By 1990, death sentence was made mandatory for blaspheming the name of the Holy Prophet (PBUH). The amended sections are so wide in their connotation that to allege blasphemy against anyone has become so easy. It therefore has cast the net wide open to rope in anyone on mere allegation of blasphemy.

Amnesty International has reported many blasphemy cases, both against members of religious minorities and also Muslims. A closer look into many of these cases shows that the law has in many instances been misused and abused to imprison people on grounds of religious enmity or for the sheer motives of business rivalry, personal grudges, land issues, conflicting political interests. The mandatory death penalty for anyone found guilty of blasphemy contributes to a climate in which religiously motivated violence flourishes.

Furthermore, a number of senseless violent attacks have happened in Pakistan during the past year – including in churches while people were at prayer, in a Christian hospital, in an ecumenical (or interreligious) NGO that worked for peace and justice. While these could be part of the general reaction to the US-led war against terrorism, these seriously shook up the already volatile environment in Pakistan.

The work for conflict transformation and just peace in Pakistan cannot just happen overnight. Dialogue is certainly not a first aid kit that one can bring to the scene. Asia Sunday 2003 is dedicated to the long and difficult work of conflict transformation and just peace which can only result when people, as equal human beings, can truly affirm to one another: "FOR WE ARE NEIGHBORS." Hence, your special offering during your celebration of Asia Sunday this year will be put together for the cause of holding up the victims of the senseless attacks and those wrongfully accused of contravening the blasphemy law in Pakistan. Please send your contributions to the following:

Christian Conference of Asia  
96, 2<sup>nd</sup> District, Pak Tin Village  
Mei Tin Road, Shatin, N. T.  
Hong Kong

via

Check Payable to: CHRISTIAN CONFERENCE OF ASIA

or via bank transfer

Account Number: 295-4-709594 (Multi Currencies Account)  
295-9-916715 (US Dollar Account)  
Hang Seng Bank, Hankow Road Branch  
4 Hankow Road, Kowloon, Hong Kong

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-- Hope S. Antone