

Introduction

I am happy to share with you the Asia Sunday 2005 resource booklet of the Christian Conference of Asia.

The theme of this year's Asia Sunday is the same as of the 12th general assembly of the CCA, "Building communities of peace for all." In fact, the Decade to Overcome Violence (DOV) focus on Asia 2005 has also the same theme.

The year 2005 began without much cheer or fanfare in Asia. The deadly stories of havoc and disaster caused by the tsunami killer waves on the coastal regions of many Asian countries on 26 December 2004 continued to haunt the people of the region as the new year broke. The chilling stories of thousands of people dead, people who have lost everything, their livelihood, thousands of children being washed away or being orphaned and traumatised, and of people missing and displaced.

It is against this background that we need to reflect about building communities of peace for all. How do we build communities of peace when people around us are suffering due to lack of food, jobs, water, sanitation, drinking water, and threat of diseases? How can we ever talk about peace building when future seems so bleak to thousands of people?

Peace is not just the absence of war or conflict. It has to be rooted in social and economic justice. Peace building has to do with conviction and commitment for removal of poverty, unemployment, social inequality and all kinds of discrimination.

Building communities of peace means relying on creativity, sustainability, mutual responsibility and prosperity of all people. Let us keep these elements closer to our hearts as we celebrate Asia Sunday 2005.

The resources in this booklet include prayers, meditations, religious texts, hymns and songs.

Please set aside a Sunday as Asia Sunday on 8 May or any day as Asia Prayer Day, which could be a time for reflection and meditation on peace and peace building efforts.

I hope and pray that Asia Sunday 2005 will give us added strength, courage and commitment for building communities of peace for all.

AHN Jae Wong
General Secretary
Christian Conference of Asia

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Acknowledgement

- Bruce Prewer, “Resources for Revised Common Lectionary” in www.alphalink.com.au/~nigel
- Christian Conference of Asia. *Building Communities of Peace for All Theme and Stories, 2005*
- Christian Conference of Asia. *Sound the Bamboo, 1999 and 2000*
- Hannah Varghese, for the CCA 12th Assembly 2005 logo
- NCC Philippines. “Girls and Boys: Following Jesus Together” Vacation Church School 1996
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I. An Invitation to Celebrate Asia Sunday

Background

Every year since 1974, on the Sunday before Pentecost, the CCA member churches and councils celebrate Asia Sunday. Some churches and ecumenical partners around the world have joined in this celebration in solidarity with the churches and people in Asia in our hopes and struggles. Asia Sunday commemorates the founding of the East Asia Christian Conference (EACC, now CCA) on May 14, 1959 as Asian churches “witnessing together”. This year Asia Sunday falls on **May 8, 2005**.

In 2001 the Asia Sunday focused on the theme “Cultivating the Culture of Peace: Overcoming Violence.” The Asian churches joined the ecumenical family in putting central in their life and witness the task of peace building within the Decade to Overcome Violence (DOV) initiated by World Council of Churches, which calls for:

- Addressing holistically the wide varieties of violence, both direct and structural, in homes, communities, and in international arenas and learning from the local and regional analyses of violence and the ways to overcome violence;
- Challenging the churches to overcome the spirit, logic, and practice of violence; to relinquish any theological justification of violence; and to affirm anew the spirituality of reconciliation and active nonviolence;
- Creating new understanding of security in terms of cooperation and community, instead of in terms of domination and competition;
- Learning from the spirituality and resources for peace-building of other faiths, to work with communities of other faiths in the pursuit of peace

and to challenge the churches to reflect on the misuse of religious and ethnic identities in pluralistic societies;

- Challenging the growing militarization of our world, especially the proliferation of small arms and weapons.

In 2005, DOV is focused in Asia. Overcoming violence is crucial because we have seen violence escalating, not abating. The different forms of violence whether in personal, family, religious and cultural, local community, national, international and ecological realms have continued to destroy the fiber of our humanity and creation in the different Asian contexts.

In fact the year 2005 opened with the tremendous challenge of dealing with the coordinated relief and rehabilitation demands in Asian communities and countries around the Indian Ocean ravaged by the harrowing tsunami disaster especially in Indonesia, Sri Lanka, India, Thailand, Malaysia, Bangladesh and Myanmar. More than 290,000 were reported dead or missing and 5 millions or more were left homeless! Think of hundreds of thousands of widows and orphans. Many churches, along with agencies, organizations, individuals, governments have responded with noble intentions which brought us together as a global community. But there were many stories of how suffering and violence were increased in the affected areas which call the church to have a deeper look into the challenges of overcoming violence and building communities of peace for all in faithfulness to our Lord Jesus Christ.

- *“There is more interreligious tension in Aceh because certain Christian groups give aid with the old missiological motif, quoting biblical passages and giving messages. The Muslim party therefore has warned the people not to receive aid from Christians – which affect the work of ecumenical Christians who do not wave their Christian flag while doing relief operation.”*

- Sylvana Ranti-Apituley, Indonesia

- ***Tsunami destroys villages but fails to break down caste walls.***

Activists from the National Campaign on Dalit Human Rights, Safai Karmachari Andolan and Sakshi Human Rights Watch, who toured tsunami-hit dalit villages in Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh brought back accounts of serious discrimination in aid distribution and rehabilitation.

- <http://www.infochangeindia.org/features237.jsp>

- *In this Clearinghouse, we are trying to tell the tsunami story from the perspective of small-scale fisherfolks, farmers and tribal people, many of whom have not only suffered from the recent natural disaster but also from 'Costa Disasta' development long before the killer waves hit. And even in the post tsunami era, impoverished communities in Sri Lanka and Thailand have to defend their rights to land and livelihood as big investors rush to grab tsunami-affected areas in order to build new hotels and other tourism complexes. Some tourism promoters have suggested that jobless fishermen should be trained to work in hotels and other tourist facilities. But small-scale fisherfolks in Thailand have their own ideas on how to build a socially and environmentally sustainable future.*

- Anita Pleumarom, Tourism Investigation & Monitoring Team

- *Mangrove swamps are nature's way of protecting coastal areas from large waves and cyclones. But intensive shrimp farming and unbridled tourism have destroyed mangroves and coral reefs and caused the dilution of coastal regulations. The tsunami must therefore be seen as not just the wrath of nature, but the result of faulty economic practices and the destruction of ecosystems.*

- <http://www.infochangein.org/features234.jsp>

- *A collective of women's rights groups who have conducted a series of fact-finding missions in the tsunami-affected areas in Sri Lanka brought to public attention serious issues concerning the safety and wellbeing of women which have not been addressed so far in relief efforts.*

The heightened vulnerability of people in these areas due to the destruction of communication lines and the large-scale mass displacement and death of people has created situations in which women and girls become more likely to encounter violence.

- *In particular, we have received reports of incidents of rape, gang rape, molestation, and physical abuse of women and girls in the course of unsupervised rescue operations and while resident in temporary shelters, particularly in the south. Apart from these incidents (the number of which is not known), these reports have also indicated that women's mobility continues to be restricted due to the fear of sexual violence. No proper monitoring body has been set up to receive complaints, to take action against perpetrators, or to ensure the safety of women in these areas.*

- Press Release from Sri Lanka

- *Orphaned children are vulnerable during critical times as they lay prey to syndicates that traffic children for prostitution and other evil reasons. Reports of the threat and cases of exploitation of children call for more vigilance in order to protect children from more violence.*

Thus during this DOV-Asia Focus year, CCA calls for member churches and councils to once more boldly state the message of the gospel of Jesus Christ who comes to proclaim the "Good News of peace to all" (Eph. 2:17 TEV) in this Asian

context, in words and action. The Asia Sunday 2005 carries the theme “Building Communities of Peace for All”. This is also the theme of the CCA 12th General Assembly in Chiang Mai.

Why the theme: Building Communities of Peace for all

The theme reflects Asia’s reality of diversity in terms of race/ethnicity, language, culture, and religion, and which then creates many diverse communities. Unfortunately in many places in Asia, these differences are often the cause of opposition, discrimination, division, discord, and animosity. However, the theme also reflects our affirmation that plurality or diversity need not be a cause for animosity. Differences can teach us to respect one another, to work and live together, without trying to undermine, swallow, or lord over the other.

The theme also reflects our commitment to the task of building communities of peace. For Asians, peace is not simply the absence of war or conflict. Rather, it is the realization of God’s will for fullness of life for all – which includes healthy food and decent jobs for the poor; security and dignity of life for those who have been violated and abused; and sustainability of the earth’s resources, to name a few.

Finally, the theme reflects our conviction that the task of building communities of peace for all is something that Asian Christians share with all other communities in Asia. We can no longer think of uniformity but of pluriformity, i.e. many communities rather than one. When all these communities work together to realize the common vision, then there will be peace for all. (from CCA 12th Assembly *Theme and Stories*)

Format

Rather than a full liturgy, the Asia Sunday 2005 booklet once again provides liturgical resources that may be used or adapted by churches.

Invitation for Special Offering

Aside from immediate response to the emergency needs in tsunami disaster areas, CCA facilitated the coming together of member councils and churches in a workshop on *Ecumenical Ministry in Post-Tsunami Situation in Asia* in Sri Lanka in January 2005. The workshop focused on developing policy, strategy, and dynamics for the people-centered reconstruction and rehabilitation of those victimized communities. CCA would like to sustain joint efforts of member churches in caring for each other.

We invite churches to have special offering, which will go towards the rehabilitation program in countries hit hard by tsunami.

Translation, Distribution, News Sharing

This liturgical material is offered for churches' use on Asia Sunday whether on May 8 or any date suitable. Once again, we invite member churches and councils to

- ❖ translate this material into different languages;
- ❖ disseminate widely to local churches for their use; share news about your celebration, how this material has helped you and your suggestions for the future observance of Asia Sunday. Send email and pictures of celebration, if possible, to cca@cca.org.hk

By God's grace may we find this Asia Sunday 2005 booklet a blessing as we gather and celebrate "believing that the purpose of God for the church in Asia is life together in a common obedience of witness to the mission of God in the world." (from the Constitution of CCA)

II. Ideas for Liturgy

The Worship Center and Preparation

- ❖ The chairs may be arranged in a u-shape, v-shape or semi-circle with altar in the center to symbolize God's presence in the midst of the worshiping congregation and provide more eye contact among community members.
- ❖ The congregation may learn the songs from Sound the Bamboo CCA Hymnal and the CCA theme song in preparation for the worship. Music is one of the creative expressions of "life together in common obedience" of the churches in Asia.
- ❖ Representatives (any woman, child, man, youth, person with disability, elderly, etc.) from the worshiping congregation may put on the altar the symbols such as
 - A small bowl of salt which may be brought around to the congregation to taste during or after the message
 - White cloth symbolizing the living Christ's presence placed around the bowl of salt and flowing down to a map of Asia to show the breath of the Asian continent where CCA member churches and councils are called to a common witness and service in the name of our Lord. There may be a time in the worship when children will name the countries in Asia where there are CCA member churches.
- ❖ Let there be time for **silence** -- time to listen to the inner voice within; time to contemplate on inner peace.

❖ Words of Preparation

Today is the final Sunday of the Easter season.

Christ Jesus lives on among his people!

Christ Jesus lives on indeed!

We are just one week away from Pentecost.

*During this week most of the church, world-wide,
prays for the unity of Christianity.*

*We follow the prayer attributed to Jesus by the
Gospel of St John:*

*“That they (the disciples) may be one
even as we (the Father and Son) are one.”*

Let each of us own that prayer:

May we all be one, and Jesus and his God were one.

Call to Worship

Leader: Many are the torments of the wicked,
But steadfast love surrounds those who
trust in the Lord. (Psalm 32:10)

People: We come to worship you, O God.
As your people, in you we trust.

Leader: Be glad in the Lord and rejoice,
O righteous,
And shout for joy, all you upright in heart.
(Psalm 32: 11)

People: We come to worship you, O God.
As your people, in you we find our joy.

OR

Leader: God of Asia, God of all,
who created living creatures
and all of creation in heaven and on earth
You created us to live in community
and declared all of your creation good
-- for you are good!

People: We praise you, O God,
our community life is in you.
In our brokenness, we worship you.
May your goodness heal and fill us
through your Son Jesus Christ, our Lord,
and through the work of the Holy Spirit.

All: Amen.

OR

**Responsive reading:
Psalm 22:1-2, 14, 19 (paraphrased)**

Men: Our God, our God, why have you forsaken
us?

Women: Why are you so far from helping us, from
the words of our groaning?

Men: Oh, our God, we cry by day, but you do
not answer, and by night, but find no rest.

Women: We are poured out like water, and all our
bones are out of joint, our hearts are like
wax, they are wilted within our breasts.

All: But you, O Lord, do not be far away!
You are our help, come quickly to our aid!

Prayer of Approach

Glory be to you, great reconciling God, in you our Lord
Jesus found his guide and goal. Encouraged by his
Spirit, we come to you with thanksgiving and praise.

Draw us closer to you that we may be closer to each
other, and closer to each other that we may be closer to

you. As we seek your blessing on this gathering, we also pray for your blessing on all other congregations who will gather on this Asia Sunday. Help us to find a unity in praise and in outreach. We long for the day when the world will say of us: "See how well these Christians love one another."

Then shall Christ Jesus be truly glorified on earth, and our earthly songs shall echo the music of heaven. Amen!

Confession and Assurance

Introduction to confession:

Leader:

My friends, when we think of the disunity of the church, it is hard to get our thinking straight, let alone our feelings. Reading the church's story, we can understand and sympathise with the reason for the formation of different denominations. Moreover at the present time there are many special things about our own denomination which we treasure and for which we give God thanks. Yet we know we were not meant to be so broken up under different labels as if we were competing laundry detergents or breakfast cereals. Therefore let us sincerely seek the mercy of God.

Let us pray.

All:

Merciful God, please show us ourselves as you see us. Give us insight into the fractured Church at the present time that we may be capable of genuine repentance and renewal.

Convict us of all sins of indifference, prejudice, self righteousness, enmity or sectarian egotism. If we need gentle rebuke,

please do that for us.
If we need confronting and breaking down,
then please do that for us.
If we need forgiving and then painful reshaping,
please take us in hand and change us for your glory.
Lord have mercy
Christ have mercy
Lord have mercy

FORGIVENESS

My sisters and brothers in Christ Jesus, know this for certain:
There is no personal or churchly sin that lies outside the remedy of Christ's grace on the cross,
There is no evil that cannot be conquered by the resurgent power of the risen and exalted Lord.
To those who turn from darkness to light there is forgiveness and a new day.
Accept from the hands of God the free gift of liberation and healing.
It is yours for the taking.
Thanks be to God!

Psalm 68: 3-10; 32-35 (paraphrased)

Reader 1: Now let the loving people celebrate,
let them leap before you and shout for joy.
Sing and sing again, to God who sweeps
by like rain clouds across an arid land.

All: As Parent of orphans and Friend of
widows,
God makes a holy home among us.
God gives the destitute a place to live in,
and liberates the forgotten prisoners.
They go out to live productive lives,
but the rebels end up in the wastelands.

Reader 2: God, your people do let you lead them,
they stride with you through the
wilderness,
the earth moves and the heavens pour
when you are the Pastor among us.

All: Monsoon rains fall everywhere
restoring the land we have inherited.
Your flock find themselves at home,
you provide for the least and last.

Reader 3: Sing to God all nations of the earth,
sing the song of joy everywhere
to the One who rides through time
and speaks with a cosmic voice.
Tremble with wonder at the power of God
with the faithful throughout the universe.
Awesome is God of holiest places,
giving courage and strength to the faithful.

Prayer of Intercession

Invite leaders to pray for overcoming violence and
building communities of peace in:

- your country
- Asia
- the world

Blessing/Benediction

O God, may your grace and wisdom unite us,
May your love strengthen us,
May your joy sustain us,
May the victory of Christ over death keep us hopeful,
As we go out and work for peace.

III. Biblical Reflections

Have salt in yourselves, and be at peace with each other. [Mark 9:50b]

The verse is part of a series of sayings by Jesus, which includes a warning about being salted with fire and of salt losing its saltiness. Seen in the Markan context, salt and fire, which are images of preserving food, seem to speak of trials and persecution as ways through which a people's integrity or faith was tested and preserved.

"Have salt in yourselves" can mean 'have strength among yourselves so you can nourish the earth', for salt was an abundant material around the Dead Sea area of Palestine, used for enriching manure pile and fertilising the land. As such, the strength of salt was made effective in its immersion or diffusion in soil, not in being set apart. Oftentimes, salt is understood as a kind of purifier, additive stabilizer, or flavour-enhancer. Whichever it is, its effect is made possible only when immersed in something, not in being apart.

"Have salt in yourselves" also brings to mind the place of salt in sacrificial offering (Leviticus 2:13), in mealtable sharing (Ezra 4:14), and especially in covenant making. In Old Testament times covenants were sealed and confirmed by a formal meal in which the parties concluded the pact by partaking of salt together. Thus, eating salt together was a sign of hospitality and covenant loyalty.

"Have salt in yourselves, and be at peace with each other" also means 'stick together and be at peace with each other', for there is value in collectivity, in being community.

In addition, the verse can also be seen in view of an earlier narrative:

"Teacher," said John, "we saw a man driving out demons in your name and we told him to stop, because he was not one of us." "Do not stop him," Jesus said. "No one who does a miracle in my name can in the next moment say anything bad about me, for whoever is not against us is for us." [Mark 9:38-40]

If driving out demons in Christ's name means exorcising any evil that dehumanizes people, and if for Jesus doing such a much needed work is more important than having a particular religious badge or label, or belonging to a particular group of people, then such work is not the monopoly of anyone or any group.

Our Longing for Peace

We hoped for peace but no good has come, for a time of healing but there was only terror. [Jeremiah 8:15]

So justice is far from us, and righteousness does not reach us. We look for light, but all is darkness; for brightness, but we walk in deep shadows. [Isaiah 59:9]

We live in a time of great longing for peace all over the world. In Asia, the lack of peace is evident in the negative impact of economic globalization that continues to widen the gap between the haves and have-nots in many countries and between the developed and developing nations, which is at the root of much unrest in Asia. There is also structural violence carried out by dictatorial or negligent governments, and in some places covered up by so-called ethnic or religious differences. Corruption in places of authority and the use of military might to curtail dissent only creates more unrest and violence.

Aggravating the present situation is the rise of "new empires" - i.e. powerful countries that dominate the weaker ones. To ensure their control of the unjust global economic order, they have waged the so-called war on terror and have sought the

support of Asian countries that occupy strategic geographical locations. Daubing old conflicts in Asia as part of the so-called global war on terror has diverted people's attention from their real life and death issues.

Meanwhile, many cultures of Asia are steeped in highly patriarchal systems that keep women oppressed. Very often, religious teachings and beliefs reinforce the low regard for women. Apart from gender injustice, many cultures and religions also participate in the discrimination of certain people because of age, disability, sexual orientation, race, class and caste.

In Asia, the culture of violence does not only affect people through violation of their human dignity. The abuse of nature and ecology, resulting from an unsustainable development paradigm has plundered much of the region's natural resources, thereby leading to serious ecological violence that threatens not only the life of present but also of future generations. The proliferation of armaments, ranging from small arms to nuclear arms, is a real threat to Asia. Whether linked to intra-state or inter-state conflicts (e.g. in Sri Lanka, Indonesia, Philippines, the Korean peninsula, the Taiwan straits and the Indian sub-continent), issues of sovereignty and human dignity contribute to so much restlessness, instability, and insecurity in the region.

(from CCA 12th Assembly Theme and Stories)

IV. Stories of Building Communities of Peace

Meeting Each Other as Religious Neighbours

Three years ago the Wellington Hindu Community built a temple behind the Newlands shopping mall. Just prior to its opening, the St Oswald Union Parish* wrote to the Hindu community welcoming them to Newlands. Apart from this initial letter of greetings nothing further was done.

However, the Decade to Overcome Violence studies "Why violence? Why not peace?" precipitated some action. When one of the St Oswald's groups using the studies addressed the question at the end, "What are you going to do?" it felt that some kind of dialogue with the Hindu temple community should be promoted. This suggestion arose from the fourth study, which was entitled, "What kind of identity?" In the Bible study section the following questions were asked; " Do our circles of privilege and responsibility in the churches include or exclude the strangers who live in our community? What does it mean for God to care for them as much as God cares for those of us who believe?"

The suggestion that St Oswald should initiate discussions with the Temple community was taken to Parish Council, which positively endorsed the idea. St Oswald's Minister, Rev. Barry Jones contacted the chairperson of the Temple committee and indicated the Parish's openness to establish relationships. He was told that he would be made very welcome at the Temple any Sunday morning when the committee meets.

When Barry visited the Temple complex he was made very welcome and ushered into the committee room. In his introductory remarks, Barry mentioned the World Council of

* St Oswald's Union Parish in Newlands, Wellington is a DOV Pilot Project

Churches programme "Dialogue with people of other Living Faiths." He also mentioned the Decade to Overcome Violence and how the studies prepared by the WCC had motivated St Oswald to propose that discussions be held between the two faith communities.

During his conversation with the Committee members, Barry spoke about Rev. Wesley Ariarajah's book, "Not without my neighbour - issues in inter faith relations." Wesley is a Sri Lankan whose family was the only Christian family in a Hindu village. Growing up with close Hindu friends, Wesley observed that their prayer life was for them profoundly meaningful, and that it bore fruit! They were gracious and generous neighbours. And yet visiting Christian evangelists would preach that 'Christians were going to heaven and Hindus to hell!' Wesley rebelled at the idea and concluded it was clearly unfair. "I wouldn't want to be in heaven where our neighbours were not." Hence the title for his book.

When Barry finished, the Chairperson of the Temple committee said to him, "We must meet each other as religious neighbours." The conversation continued and it was agreed that the Temple Committee would invite St Oswald's Parish Council to meet with them in the Committee room late on a Sunday morning. The purpose of the initial meeting is to enable each faith community share a little of its history, and its range of activities.

Barry relayed the invitation back to Parish Council and there was unanimous support for the conversations to start. Another of the insights from the DOV studies that St Oswald is taking into the bilateral discussions is the "idea of ecumenical space - space where those with differences can feel safe to be themselves, to be respected without the threat of exploitation."

- <http://www.ccanz.net.nz/dov/stories/neighbours.html>

Interfaith Peace Building

Violence is most destructive to any society. In Moluccas, Indonesia, people suffer from material loss. Displaced people are still suffering because many of them live in makeshift houses, with neither comfort nor privacy. Many more suffer psychologically and mentally. Many children are traumatized after seeing their loved ones being killed in front of their eyes. Others feel very insecure about their future and live in fear of the next outbreak of violence anytime.

Some questions asked by the people are: "What sin have we committed to receive all this punishment? Are we that sinful that God is punishing us so much?" They reflect the traditional theology, which focuses very much on sin and punishment. If every suffering is seen as punishment from God, only the sinner is likely to be punished. This kind of theology indulges us in self-critique, which is not bad actually, but, to a certain extent, it prevents us from taking responsibility in addressing unjust practices in society including the evil deeds committed by the perpetrators of the Moluccan conflicts. People are led to develop an inward-looking spirituality instead of one that focuses on the transformation of society and manifestation of justice.

In the heat of the conflict in August 1999, a small group of Moluccan women from the Moslem and Christian communities came together, realizing that conflict and violence would not solve but only worsen the problem. We realized that women were called to show alternative ways to solve our differences. This of course is not easy, because eight months of conflict had turned many women against one another. The first meeting, mediated by the Governor's wife at the request of the Christian women, was not a very pleasant one. One could sense mistrust, anger, and accusing finger pointed at each other. "You and your community are to blame for the whole condition," we seem to say to one another. Of

course we tried to smile to one another, but there was no warmth. But we did not give up on each other. Instead we kept on meeting and we shared stories about our experience of the conflict. The storytelling process helped in letting out steam and in making us realize that we were all victims of the conflict. That realization brought us closer to one another. From then on we continued to meet, making friends with one another again. Since Moluccans love to sing, we used singing in our meeting. As we became closer, we planned courses of action together – such as demanding a stop to violence, working with youth who were recruited to throw bombs, and empowering women to become agents of reconciliation and peace.

This was not a smooth sailing work because certain parties disapproved of our activities. The night after we staged our first protest against violence, one of our Moslem friends was terrorized for having been seen on television with Christians, the enemy. We had to call the military chief so she would be left alone. Christian women were also threatened by their men for the same reason. But we did not give in to threat. We kept our activities going, building cell groups for peace and reconciliation, and working on a healing process for our people.

Then we started a program called “Closing the Gap”, with the help of two facilitators – Joy Balazo from Uniting Church of Australia and Sr. Menggay Balazo from the Philippines. This peace building program focuses on addressing prejudices, mistrust and suspicions which Christians and Moslems in the Moluccas now have towards each other. Women and men participate in the program. In six days of living together in the same house, eating and working together, playing games and analysing those games, sharing stories, laughing and crying together, Christian and Moslem men and women learn to live with one another again in spite of their differences. They are also asked to address their prejudices for one another due to religious or ethnic differences.

From our experience in the Moluccas I can say how easily people are provoked into violence if religious sentiments are involved and manipulated. Therefore people all over the world need to work hard to reposition religion back to its proper place. That of being a source of inspiration for peace and reconciliation; that of giving direction and sense of meaning to life; not to be used and manipulated for interests other than life itself.

- Margaretha Hendriks-Ririmasse in *Theme and Stories (abridged)*

* * *

A Statement by the Kyushu District on Sexual Harassment

The Kyushu District is resolved to confront with sincerity and seriousness matters which have been occurring continuously and concretely and the complaints which have been arising from said matters, based on the understanding that sexual harassment is a form of violence, a direct violation of human rights, and a form of sexual discrimination.

The Kyushu District admits the sins and guilt of the churches and apologizes from the depth of its heart for ignoring the suffering of the victims of sexual harassment.

The Kyushu District will make inquiry into the situation of the churches in which sexual harassment has risen and where it has continued. The District declares that no sexual harassment in speech or behavior which will trample "the reverence for human life" will be ever permitted.

May 3, 2002, The Kyushu District of the United Church of Christ in Japan (Adopted by the Kyushu District at the 52nd Annual Assembly)

- Shared by Ms. Nishio Misao

I Just Want To Go Home

It was a hot, humid, dusty day when my little world exploded. The heat was as oppressive as the crowded, dirty huts, the barbed wire, the narrow paths full of sewer water, and the hopelessness in the refugee camp. How many hundreds of families were receiving a can of milk that day I cannot recall. All I remember is the feeling of futility, looking over the shambles of what served as home for thousands of refugees, and trying to tell myself that even though one can of milk was not very much, it was of some help, and that was all I could do anyway.

That's all I remember, that is, until I met the little girl. I will never forget that. She was about six years old, with a dirty face, tattered clothing, and tangled hair. A white cloth on her head told me that she was in mourning.

She looked at me with her sad eyes, two tears forming to drop noiselessly to her cheeks.

"Uncle, why do you have to give me this milk?"

"Because there's no other way for you to get food."

"Why is that, Uncle?"

"There's no food in refugee camps."

"But Uncle, why do I have to live here?"

"There's a war going on, Little One."

"I like my home so much better. Why can't I go home?"

"The war's going on. There's still bombing there."

"Why are they fighting, Uncle?"

"It's hard to understand, Little One. Most adults don't understand."

"But they dropped bombs on my home."

"I know, Little One. It makes me sad."

"My mother and father are still there."

"Maybe you'll get to see them again soon."

"When, Uncle? When?"

"I don't know, Little One. When the war is over."

"Will it be over soon?"

"I don't know. I hope so."

"I'm sad, Uncle. I don't want to cry any longer."

"I don't want to cry any more either. Do you want this milk?"

"No, I just want to go home."

I looked at her pleading face, and then down at the can of milk. The goodwill wilted in the oppressive atmosphere of the refugee camp. My mind raced with questions:

Why *is* the war still going on?

What more can I do?

Isn't this can of milk of any value?

And the only answer I could hear was a soft, trembling voice saying; "I just want to go home Uncle.

The war is over now. Peace has at last come. I imagine the little girl has finally gone back home. She's gone to visit her mother and father and placed fresh wild flowers on their graves.

She has given me a new vision. The helping hand holding out a can of milk has faded away, and in its place is an outstretched hand saying, "How can I help you go home?"

- Max Ediger

* * *

Peace Education with Children

In Sri Lanka, crippled by ethnic conflicts for 20 or more years, the South Asia Ecumenical Partnership Programme (SAEPP) has peace education through nurseries/pre-schools. Ten nurseries in areas of Thiliady, Arthimotai, Muthur, Ottamawadi, Muthur, Ottamavadi, Pothuvil, Kotagala, Pussellwa, Murungan, Madukarai and Eluthoor were selected to promote a curriculum on value based education on peace and reconciliation among the younger generation who were born in a war mentality. This fosters understanding as children of Tamils, Sinhalese and Muslims are taught together. Parents appreciate sending their children to these pre-schools.

(from SAEPP Annual Report 2003-2004)

Building Bridges in Kashmir

In 1997 I had the opportunity to travel in the Jammu and Kashmir State. The journey unfolded, from strife torn Kashmir Valley to the pigeon- holes across the Pir Panjal range in migrant camps situated 300 kms. in Jammu, where a sizeable number of Kashmiri Pundits had fled in 1990, following widespread violence and demonstrations in the Valley. After almost seven years as I listened to the narratives of both sides, visited the sites of destruction, families who had lost their loved ones, those who were waiting for theirs to return and those who were waiting themselves to return -to their motherland, a sense of despair descended. To me the narratives and images reflected the fractured reality of Kashmir conflict and the sharp divide between ethnic communities. Each reality however was a sacred truth for the beholder. What appeared to the discerning eye was that the reality of Muslims was different from the reality of Hindus. The urban reality was different from the rural one and regional realities of the State of Jammu and Kashmir also presented a varied diversity. Clearly for me, the reality reflected an ideological, political, historical and perceptual divide between communities' and people of the region. However, I also noticed a palpable longing among people to bridge distances, emotional, psychological and as well as geographical.

What also came across was the impact of violence on everybody's life, especially women. Directly as widows, half-widows, destitute, victims of rape and the fundamentalist's diktats, victims of abduction and torture they bore the maximum burden of violence and as internally displaced women they struggle to keep their homes and families together. I also witnessed how in many ways on account of breakdown of health and educational infrastructure, economic deprivation, unemployment, disruption in the function of the family system and as a result of social malaise, their sorrows continued to

multiply. Of particular concern for me was the way violence had driven women into silence.

The humanitarian crisis that I witnessed was too traumatic to bear. People were too terrorized and in fear. They did not trust their closest friend or relative. I too was traumatized to the core of my being. It affected me, more so because these were my people - my land. There was a conflict raging within -of identities (national, religious and gender). Albeit, the trauma and conflict was short-lived and was overshadowed with a desire to do something proactive, to search for solutions and meanings and most of all to create spaces where people could begin a dialogue. Most importantly there was a need to bring forth women's voices that I thought had been marginalized and were being included only in victim hood discourse. There was total denial and an ominous silence to articulate women's concern and not to acknowledge their supportive role in keeping their families and communities together even in the midst of exploding violence. There was a need for both, hear women's voices and bring about a non-violent social transformation. It was also extremely important to create spaces for an inclusive discourse and reconciliation between communities.

WISCOMP's (Women in Security Conflict Management and Peace) invaluable initiative at this crucial juncture by organizing a Roundtable called 'Breaking the Silence', in New Delhi in 2000 and subsequent forming of Athwaas (a Kashmiri word meaning a hand shake), a group of Kashmiri women (Athwaas has Kashmir Pandit, Muslim and Sikh women and I am a member) representing the multicultural Kashmiri society was the beginning of a process for trust and friendship at the grassroots. Athwaas traveled collectively in the Valley and migrant camps, witnessing each other's reality, listening to stories of pain and separation, breaking stereotypes, dispelling myths which had build over a period of decade, communicating their feelings about the conflict, the violence and love for each other. It was an emotional moment for each

one of us. Moreover our collective experience held us together in a new kind of bond. We in listening to each other created a space for a new discourse to emerge, thereby rehumanising the face of the brutal conflict.

It was emotionally and spiritually consuming to keep the group together. We came from different religious and ethnic backgrounds and were positioned diametrically opposite to each other. Our perceptions and worldviews were different. But our collective journey provided us an insight into what violence can do to humanity and therefore the bond that we share is based on the knowledge that we do not have to negate each other's pain or grief but to acknowledge it and transcend it collectively. As such a new space has been created -wherein our collective catharsis has created a new inclusive space for trust and friendship. However this has not been a linear journey. People positioned outside the space, from our respective communities or groups with extremist viewpoints perceive this as 'betrayal' or threat to the political stand of certain sections from both communities. Even while accepting the dangers of working in hostile environment and pressures, we continue to uphold our ideology based on values of co-existence, justice and peace.

After almost two years, each member of Athwaas has taken an individual initiative at the grassroots. These are called Samanbals (a Kashmiri word which means 'a meeting place'). These are spaces where women, around a development activity meet to share their experiences and ideas so as to heal and build trust in the community. In a society which is ravaged with war and abuse, where there are no safe spaces for self expression or for that matter in the migrant camps where people continue to live in ghettos, a space which the women can claim to be theirs is a remarkable opening for dialogue and discussion and thus planting the seed for empowering them. This initiative has taken wings even when the socio-political landscape of Jammu and Kashmir continues to be etched with violence and brutality.

For me personally, it has not been a linear journey. One had to battle many conflicts within. However every step towards creative action, building relationships and healing has helped in transcending borders and boundaries based on notions of religions and territories. I have tried to bring these values and ethics in other spheres of my life, either through writing or initiating a dialogue between people. In a similar way as Athwaas, a voluntary group of young Kashmiris called Yakjah (a Kashmiri word which means 'Together') was founded by me with other like-minded Kashmiris in 2003. Yakjah in the same year collaborated with Pandies Theatre to work with children from Valley and the migrant camps in Jammu. It was challenging to work with children from the Kashmiri Muslim and Pandit (Hindu) communities. The children through theatre workshops learnt about each other and some of their images of 'the other' or the 'enemy' vanished. After initial reservations they later laughed and sang together. The process and the idea of positive action as a counter to terror motivate me to continue to build bridges for solidarity, sisterhood and universal love.

- Ashima Kaul



V. Hymns and Songs

God of Asia, God of All

Lyrics by Salvador T. Martinez (Philippines)

Music by Garrett Intorn (Thailand)

1 God of A - sia, God of all, From in - a - ny na - tions we come, To bring praise and wor - ship you, For our
 2 God of A - sia, God of all, We are peo - ple di - vi - ded, Our lands are de - vas - ta - ted, For all
 3 God of A - sia, God of all, Our peo - ple are suf - fer - ing, Vi - o - lence is in - creas - ing, Save

pro - ple and our wars and our us from hope - less - ness, We come to be - lieve, O, grant us thank you mer - ci - ful your peace, God of A - sia, God of all,

Turn our doubts in - to faith, And our fears in - to hope, Let love rule in our hearts, Let jus - tice rule in our lands, God of A - sia, God of all, O give us strength to serve, And love to per - se - vere, Till true peace with jus - tice, Reign in our cum - mu - ni - ties, A - men.

Chords: G, D, Bm, Em, Bm, Em, G, C, G, D, B, C, G, A', D, G, C, G, B, C, G, C, (G/A), D', G, C, G.

Tempo: *rit*

LORD of Life

Unison (♩ = 84)

1. LORD of life and LORD of na - tions, giv - ing peace, you make us one:
2. Lengths of love be - yond all mea - sure, heights of love which now do call,
3. Vi - sions new and an - cient dream - ing see the love be - yond all death;

heart of flesh for heart of stone, break the walls of all di - vi - sion. Your
breadth of love as room for all, depths of love where hide the trea - sure, through
new the heav - ens, new the earth: prom - ise of the king - dom com - ing. Through

king - dom come, with this its sign: our song this prayer: let peace now reign.
Christ, our Way, we find true peace, a world made whole in God's em - brace.
Christ the wounds of all this world in God's own peace will then be healed.

Words: Anthony Kelly, Australia
Music: *GOD OF PEACE*; Christopher Willcock, Australia

Words by permission of Anthony Kelly CSSR.
Music by permission of Christopher Willcock.

Ephesians 2:14; Revelation 21:1-4

Christ Is Our Peace

(♩ = 108)

1. Christ is our peace, Christ is our health,
 2. Peace in your mouth, peace in the hands
 3. Who work for peace find the true wealth,

he the true Word, his the true wealth —
 o - pen to truth, to love's de - mands;
 who heal the hurt find their own health —

gifts to be shared by the sim - ple and poor:
 those who would go with Christ al - so must bleed —
 peace will flow on through the hearts that be - lieve:

peace in your land, peace at your door.
 bright is the flower, burst is the seed.
 this may we know, thus may we live.

Words: Shirley E. Murray, New Zealand
 Music: SAM-KIAP; I-to Loh, Taiwan

Ephesians 2:14; Matthew 16:24-25

I Want to Live in a Friendly World

I want to live in a friend-ly world, a friend-ly world,
 a friend-ly world. I want to live in a friend-ly world
 1) that's kind to folk like me. ...Be _____
 2) wher-ev-er I may...

1) If I run short of a cup of milk
 2) If I've no friends or a place to live

1) And my next-door neigh-bor's in,
 2) or in need of me-di-cine,

I want to know that he won't say "no"
 to the co-lor of my skin

1) or the place from whence I came,
 2) or the church I wor-ship in,

or my great grand-fa-ther's name. (I want to live...)

Come Now, O Prince of Peace

(Korean: *Osošo*)

(♩ = 88)

1. *O - so - so* *o - so - so* *pyong-hwa - ūi* *im - gum*
 2. *O - so - so* *o - so - so* *sa - rang - ūi* *im - gum*
 1. Come now, O Prince of peace, make us one bod - y,
 2. Come now, O God of love, make us one bod - y,
 3. Come now and set us free, O God, our Sav - ior,
 4. Come Hope of u - ni - ty, make us one bod - y,

u - ri - ga han - mom i - ru - ge ha - so - so.
u - ri - ga han - mom i - ru - ge ha - so - so.
 come, O Lord Je - sus, re - con - cile your peo - ple.
 come, O Lord Je - sus, re - con - cile your peo - ple.
 come, O Lord Je - sus, re - con - cile all na - tions.
 come, O Lord Je - sus, re - con - cile all na - tions.

3. *O-so-so O-so-so*
cha-yu-ūi im-gūm,
u-ri-ga han-mom
i-ru-ge ha-so-so.

4. *O-so-so O-so-so,*
tong-il-ūi im-gūm,
u-ri-ga han-mom
i-ru-ge ha-so-so.

Words: Geonyong Lee, Korea; para. Marion Pope; alt.
 Music: *OSOSŎ*; Geonyong Lee, Korea

II Corinthians 5:17-20

VI. Involving Children

1. Draw on paper what comes to your mind with the theme “building communities of peace for all”.

2. Arrange the jumbled words and find the behavioral values we all need to develop as followers of Jesus.* You may add to these values.

Gdo reaingf

Preuscftel

rinedylf

ufathilf

tuwstoryhtr

ignrca

nevronimten finredyl

pone ot ohtres

gshrina

froggivin

lvinog

gnilicnocer

3. Color the picture



Answer to Number 2:
God fearing, respectful, friendly, faithful, trustworthy, caring, environment friendly, open to others, sharing, forgiving, loving, reconciling