

cca news



Living Together

Living Together

Interfaith cooperation is not merely an academic exercise, it is a challenge and a gift of God for living together



The cover artwork is an expression of the dreams for peace among the participants in the EASY Net Philippines Peace Workshop, held in Quezon City, 13–16 June 2003

Interfaith cooperation has become an important area of work in the ecumenical movement in recent years. Many programs have been organised on this subject at national, international and regional levels. In Asia, our daily life itself is a part of interfaith encounter.

In this issue, readers will see that the major programs of CCA have deeply reflected on the issue of interfaith cooperation. Religion can provide a common space for living, reflecting and working together.

Religion should become an instrument for inspiring people towards freedom from all kinds of captivity in terms of dogmas, ideologies, customs and habits. However, religion has been misused to wage wars and create terror in our societies.

Interfaith cooperation is not merely an academic exercise, it is a challenge and a gift of God for living together. It means building bridges of trust and living together peacefully and responsibly.

Our task is to live together with people of other faiths or no faiths as good neighbours, in order to build communities of peace, justice, hope, love and sustainability.

The statement of the Congress of Asian Theologians, which we run in this issue, also reminds us of the need for dialogue with people of other faiths for building justice, peace and integrity of creation.

All these things are possible through the active participation of all people.

Readers will find in this issue an exciting story about the Women's Ecumenical Accompaniment for Vision and Empowerment (WEAVE). It is a concrete story of living together in Asia. It is also about empowering women and expressing solidarity among them.

We, in CCA, are reshaping the staff leadership for strengthening teamwork and to demonstrate living together with our constituencies and people in the field. We hope that this will help give a better shape for the Asian ecumenical movement.

—*Abn Jae Woong*

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CATS IV: Building Communities

*Asian theologians call churches to repentance,
conversion and communion*

The Fourth Congress of Asian Theologians (CATS IV) was held in Chiang Mai, Thailand, in August 2003, hosted by Payap University. Focused on the theme, 'Building Communities: Asians in Search of New Pedagogies of Encounter', CATS featured a keynote address by Dr Wong Wai Ching, co-moderator of CATS IV and president of CCA, and input presentations on the CATS IV theme by Dr Clive Pearson, a professor from Australia, and Dr Ninan Koshy from India. Their respective respondents were Dr Noh Jung Sun, Korea, Sr Dr Mary John Mananzan, the Philippines, and Rev. Sylvanna Ranti-Apituley, Indonesia.

The participants of CATS IV issued the following statement at its closing session.

The CATS IV Statement

The Congress of Asian Theologians was founded in 1997 in Suwon, Korea, as an ecumenical venture of Asian theologians to tread new paths of theologising in Asia, under the theme, 'Asian Theology in a Changing Asia: Asian Theological Agenda towards the Twenty-first Century'. CATS II was held in Bangalore, India, in 1999 with the theme, 'Celebrating Life Together'. CATS III met in Yogyakarta, Indonesia, in 2001 with the theme, 'Visioning New Life Together among Asian Religions'.

The Congress of Asian theologians (100 participants from fifteen Asian countries and eleven other countries, sixty-four men and thirty-six women) gathered together for the CATS IV in Chiang Mai, Thailand, 3–10 August 2003, and reflected on the theme 'Building Communities: Asians in Search of New Pedagogies of Encounter'. We thanked God in and through our daily worship for the opportunity of sharing our joys, concerns and struggles in the midst of a rapidly changing Asian society.

This fourth congress is unique in including, intentionally, a one-day women's forum as part of the program, so that women's perspectives are included in the discussion of the overall theme of the congress. The women's forum called the attention of the participants of CATS IV to the continuing discrimination, exploitation and oppression against women and children, both in the church and society. They emphasised the fact that even if globalisation, militarisation and wars cause sufferings to all, women and children are the worst victims. They strongly declared that unless patriarchy is named and understood as the root of all oppressions, and interlocked with other systems of structural injustice, our quest for authentic Asian theologies would have no basis. And unless the churches and theologians struggle and overcome patriarchal val-

ues and structures in their own institutions, they cannot denounce patriarchy in society with credibility and effectively.

The Present Asian Situation

The speakers and the respondents laid out the complex portrait of the context of our theological discussions. The seriousness of interfaith and intercultural reality in Asia formed the prime point of reference for theological reflection on rising geopolitical conflicts and tensions in the region. Asia continues to be threatened by the economic, political and cultural hegemony of globalisation, militarisation and the terrorist declaration of war against the 'enemies' of the 'Empire', religious fundamentalism, wars of genocide, forced dispersal of people, continuing oppression and violence against women and children.

The congress named and denounced the demonic powers of the Empire. It strongly questioned the theological justification of the projection of Empire in the name of its gods—market, liberty and religious right. The Empire has consolidated its power and control over global resources and other economies of the world, especially Asia. The Empire has also claimed the right to define and interpret what is good/evil, right/wrong for the whole world, on its own terms, regardless of other opinions. The Empire arrogates to itself the mandate to declare war on any 'enemy' that dares to disagree with its ideology or go against its interests. Series of wars have been declared on the peoples and cultures of Asia, beginning with Afghanistan and Iraq, and probably expanding to North Korea, in the name of God, justice, freedom, peace and 'democracy'. One of the major methods used is deception of its own people, to legitimise its belligerent attacks.

In spite of the grandiose promise of progress and a better life, globalisation has actually managed to widen the gap between the rich and the poor, has exerted a disastrous impact on every sector of society, namely peasants, workers, indigenous peoples, women and urban poor. It has also accelerated the devastation of nature and its resources and caused an ecological crisis of unprecedented proportions.

Asia also has its own internal conflicts that are essentially connected to these global threats. In response to the expansion of global market and cultural-political hegemony, some people have resorted to religious fundamentalism, which accelerates the spiral of violence and the growth of intolerance among peoples who had always lived together in peace. This has escalated ethnic conflicts into violent confrontations that have resulted in genocide.

Because of economic and military violence, there are a growing number of refugees and migrants, who are vulnerable to further exploitation and human rights violations. Once again, it is the women and children who bear the brunt of this situation of violence.

In spite of all this, Asia has a unique heritage of religious and cultural wealth that affirms life and can provide a profound spiritual resource that can overcome its problems. Asia is also endowed with a continuing tradition of resistance that forms the basis of hope in its present struggles.

The Situation of the Asian Churches

Many Asian churches and theologies have been coopted by the Empire to speak for its interest. They have failed dismally in the fulfilment of their prophetic and pastoral mission. In the face of

injustice, violence and gross violations of human rights, most of the churches have remained silent. Because of their minority status and misplaced priorities, they have chosen the compromising attitude of accommodation. The churches have neither confronted the demon of patriarchy within their own institutions nor recognised the link of patriarchy with other systems, ideologies and structures of oppression and domination. The churches have not taken seriously the concerns and struggle of the poor, marginalised and oppressed. However, even if the church as an institution has failed to make an adequate prophetic voice and pastoral response, grassroots people within the church are actively involved in the struggle for peace, justice and a better quality of life for all.

Building Community Today: A Theological Reflection

In this context of economic and political violence, social disintegration and cultural alienation, it becomes an urgent imperative for the churches in Asia to build communities of resistance for peace and justice. These are communities that are inclusive, life-affirming, healing and transforming. But for the churches to build such transforming communities, they have themselves to be transformed. This calls for:

Repentance

This means that the churches recognise their own complicity in the maintenance of exploitative and oppressive forces in society. They have no courage to fulfil their prophetic task of denouncing unjust structures and of condemning those who use power to impose their will on other people, often in a violent way. This means



Participants of the Fourth Congress of Asian Theologians, held in Chiang Mai, Thailand

acknowledging the injustices happening within their own institutions and creating mechanisms to prevent these in the future. This is to face the patriarchy prevailing in its own midst admitting that even up to this day, despite the rhetoric, women have not been in actual practice given equal treatment or opportunities.

Conversion

The peace that we are pursuing is not an unprincipled peace, peace at any cost. It is peace based on justice. It is 'justpeace'. In order to bring about communities of justpeace, the churches have to be converted to **truth, justice, and interconnected well-being**.

Truth is not just not telling a lie. It is a way of life. It is authenticity. It is congruence. Conversion to truth means the churches should be models of transparency and accountability. It is to admit wrongdoing and not covering up or rationalising wrongdoing.

Conversion to justice means to be on the side of the poor, the marginalised and the oppressed and to be sensitive to the cry of the earth. It is to be one with their struggle. It is daring to take positions on socioeconomic and ecological issues even if this will result in diminishing contributions from benefactors and even if it would mean persecution from the powerful.

Conversion to interconnected wellbeing means to work unceasingly for a more equitable distribution of resources and to put the resources of the church at the service of the poor and for the improvement of the quality of life of the people. It is to refuse to be coopted into a system of development that means only the development of the few and the exclusion of the many. It means to develop compassion based on the interconnectedness of all beings.

Communion

The churches need to heal the divisions within their own confessions and then reach out to other denominations and to other communities of faith and even to those who profess no faith. They have to give up the attitude of being the sole repository of truth or the only vehicle of salvation. They have to make efforts at knowing and understanding the basic tenets of other religions. They have to be willing to really learn from each other. They should engage in cooperative endeavours in the cultivation of spirituality and in projects for justice and peace.



CATS IV in session

In building community, there is a need to reinterpret the meaning of power. The Empire's understanding of power is 'power over', controlling power, dominating and exploitative power. We need to understand power as 'power within', enabling power—facilitating power. This means giving opportunities and empowering people to take their life into their own hands, make decisions for themselves, and develop themselves to their full potentiality. We understand power also as 'power with' which means recognising the diverse gifts, resources, abilities of individual and communities gathering these together to work more effectively for the good of all.

Affirmation

We, participants of CATS IV, affirm in unambiguous terms:

- that life is sacred and therefore no people should be deprived of this most precious gift of God,
- that life is not a hierarchy but an interconnectedness of beings, human and non-human,
- that war of any form, for any reason, cannot be justified,
- that the worship of market, money and profit is a form of idolatry and is to be condemned,
- that using the scriptures (the Bible) to legitimise human rights violations, violence, discrimination and indiscriminate exploitation of God's creation is a betrayal of divine purpose.

Call to Action

We therefore recommend:

Re: Economic Justice

- that the churches make a clear position against the actions of transnational corporations that are detrimental to people (e.g. logging, deforestation, industrial pollution, genetically modified food),
- that the liberating message of the Bible should be related to contemporary social issues,
- that the churches commit themselves to a simple lifestyle to combat consumerism,
- that we affirm our cultural plurality against a monoculture that is imposed by Western globalisation.



CATS IV Women's Forum

Re: Women and Gender

- that women's perspectives should be incorporated in all courses offered and required of all theological degrees, and that a specific course on women and gender be required in schools and seminaries for all students,
- that the churches promote projects that will help or empower women, i.e. small or big entrepreneurship, enterprises, cooperatives and the like,
- that men become partners in the faith journey by integrating women's perspectives in their theologising.

Re: Violence and Peace

- that the churches should promote education and consciousness raising regarding human rights violations, oppression, domination and violence against women,
- that victims of violence should be empowered to go beyond victimhood and become survivors and advocates,
- that the churches advocate and lobby for the implementation of laws against domestic violence and sexual harassment,
- that the churches support protest actions against injustice and human violations, the anti-terrorism policies of Mr Bush and his allies and economic sanctions on the so-called 'axis of evil' countries, i.e. North Korea,
- that the churches expose sexual abuses committed in various levels of society, including those in their institutions, and demand a sincere apology from the perpetrators.

Re: Ecology

- that the churches and theologians identify and critique the anthropocentric, patriarchal and many other enslaving dimensions of the Christian scripture, texts, doctrines, theologies and traditions,
- that the church should develop and practise an earth-friendly, earth-minded lifestyle and spirituality,
- that as agents of change, church educators should adopt liberating pedagogical approaches and incorporate ecology and

ecofeminism in the curriculums of seminaries, schools, universities and the church,

- that the churches encourage and support local organic farms and a local market economy that strive to practise fair trade.

Re: Interfaith Dialogue

- that the churches and theologians redefine the understanding of mission (that was largely confined to the notion of converting) and ecclesiology,
- that intertextual reading of scriptures and sacred texts of religions should be done,
- that a common celebration of religious festivities of different religions be initiated as a sign of solidarity,
- that interfaith dialogue should be a genuine dialogue starting from below and from the grassroots,
- that dialogue of life with people of other religions be fostered and engaged in common projects for justice, peace and the integrity of creation.

Conclusion

We end this congress with a renewed commitment to our continuing search for authentic Asian theologies. As we leave for our homes may the memories of the sisterhood and brotherhood we experienced here give us the energy and inspiration to share our insights and resolutions with our own communities. Our task is not easy. We often do not see what is at the end of the tunnel. And therefore we need to cultivate the virtue of hope.

Hope is indeed one of the most important attributes of the community builder. Our hope is anchored in the continuing resistance of peoples and in our memory of God's fidelity, of the unexpected, unplanned intervention of the Holy Spirit in seemingly hopeless situations. It is a hope that surges from the inexhaustible source of strength and power within us, that combined with love empowers us to shape our common future. It is a hope that keeps alive the eternal dream of God and of humanity for the dawning of new heavens and a new earth.

Continuation Committee for CATS V Named

Members of the Continuation Committee that will plan for the Fifth Congress of Asian Theologians (CATS V) were selected from among the participants of CATS IV during the business session on 9 August.

Chosen as comoderators were Dr Nam Soon Kang and Rev. Fr Soosai Arokiasamy. Nam Soon comes from Korea and thus represents North Asia as well as the Program for Theologies and Cultures (PTCA), of which she is dean. Soosai comes from India, and hence represents South Asia as well as the Federation of Asian Bishops Conferences (FABC).

Dr Hope S. Antone, CCA's newly appointed Joint Executive Secretary for Faith, Mission and Unity, was chosen secretary,

while Rev. Yangrae Son, a pastor of the Uniting Church in Australia, hence representing the Pacific subregion, was chosen treasurer.

Members-at-large include Ms Hannah Chen of Taiwan, Sr Dr Mary John Mananzan of the Philippines, Rev. Sylvana Maria Ranti-Apituley of Indonesia and Dr Samuel Ngun Ling of Myanmar.

Other institutional representatives on the committee are Dr Sientje Merentek Abram, director of the Association of Theological Education in South East Asia (ATESEA), Br Edmund Chia of FABC and Dr Samson Prabhakar, director of the South Asia Theological Research Institute (SATHRI).

In the Fullness of Time

The Hong Kong Christian Council and Article 23

On 1 July 2003, half a million people in Hong Kong took to the streets in a peaceful mass demonstration calling for the government to hear their voices. The cause of the discontent was proposed Article 23 legislation concerning national security.

Rev. Eric So, general secretary of the Hong Kong Christian Council, was interviewed by Judy Chan about what has been happening in Hong Kong and how Christians are involved.

What is Article 23?

Article 23 is part of the Basic Law of Hong Kong, our 'mini-constitution' after the handover in 1997. Article 23 says that Hong Kong shall enact laws on its own related to national security. Last fall the government released proposed legislation for Article 23. The public was given only three months to give opinions.

There were many different views from a broad cross section of society, e.g. the legal sector, democratic groups, NGOs and the religious sector. Some groups argued against any legislation of Article 23 until there is universal suffrage in Hong Kong. They felt that if the government was not elected by the people, then we don't have confidence in our political system. Others, such as the Hong Kong Christian Council, said that there should be legislation on Article 23 as it is our duty to fulfil the Basic Law, but the critical questions are: How do we do it? What is the content? Hong Kong people understand that this sensitive issue really affects their lives and can have a deep impact if not handled carefully.

What was the position of the HKCC on Article 23?

HKCC was against the passage of Article 23 legislation at this time. We had three main concerns:

- Freedom of expression/information—This is very important for the uniqueness of Hong Kong if we want to maintain the 'one country, two systems' principle. The language used in the document didn't clearly protect the freedom of expression and the right to information.
- Proscription (banning) of organisations—The proposed Article 23 law said if any organisation in mainland China

violates their national security laws, the HK government has a right to ban affiliated organisations in Hong Kong. This is a danger to our freedom of association. The implications for the church, which is a global fellowship, are very serious.

- Increased police powers—Under the proposed legislation, the police are given emergency entry and search powers in cases involving some Article 23 offences. We support the current practice, which requires a court warrant in all cases for police to enter and search. The systems of checks and balances should be maintained to protect the independence of the judicial system.

What did the churches do to express their opposition?

In December 2002 the HKCC submitted a written opinion to the SAR government expressing these concerns. We felt this was not the time to act on Article 23 because of problems with the process, the limited consultation period and the content.

In June 2003 the government announced it was going ahead with the vote for Article 23 legislation in the Legislative Council on 9 July, despite the wide opposition expressed by the public.

A group of 100 Christian leaders organised a prayer meeting on 1 July, the holiday commemorating the handover. The meeting was held in Victoria Park and more than 8,000 Christians came. Afterwards, many Christians joined the 500,000 Hong Kong people to march to the SAR government offices. No-one had predicted that so many people would turn out. We didn't know it, but we were creating history. The events that followed were astounding. In the following

days, the government offered last-minute concessions but finally realised they now didn't have enough votes to pass the legislation. At midnight of 7 July, the government backed down and agreed to reopen the discussion on Article 23.

What happens next?

On 1 July there were 500,000 people demonstrating. On 9 July 50,000 protested outside the Legislative Council. On 13 July 20,000 joined a rally calling for universal suffrage. The HKCC urges the community to continue using peaceful, rational ways to express their opinions to the government. We want the government to hear the voice of the majority, to listen to different views and have real dialogue.

One of the things we realised after these events was that so many lay Christians were involved, often more involved than the pastors and church leaders. Is there a gap between the teachings in the Hong Kong church and the events in society? How do we connect the two?

We have a responsibility now to reflect theologically on that connection as Christians, as servants of God. How do the teachings of the Bible help to respond to these critical social and political events?

Finally, I want to say that the Hong Kong Christian Council is committed to continue playing a role in these issues. We're not going to be a counter party, but we want to be a channel of communication and let the government hear the opinions of the public. We have told the chief executive that if he wants, we will keep up this communication and give our views. As representatives of the Christian church in Hong Kong, we can work with him and we will express what we believe.

Holistic Approach to Combat HIV/AIDS

An interreligious meeting held in Bangkok on 5–6 July urged the Thai government to fight against the HIV/AIDS pandemic with a holistic perspective.

Eighty participants, comprising Buddhists, Christians and Muslims, acknowledged the vital role of religions to combat the pandemic, which has killed about 289,000 people in Thailand so far.

Professor Sulak Sivaruksa, a social critic, said that the religions could play a significant role in improving the quality of life of people, especially those living with HIV/AIDS. He challenged religious leaders to be actively involved in the day-to-day struggles of the people.

Dr Seri Pongpit, a Catholic social activist, told the meeting that all religious communities have been actively involved in combating HIV/AIDS, in establishing hospices and emergency homes, supporting income-generating projects and in organising training seminars and counselling, social education and advocacy campaigns. These experiences need to be shared and consolidated, he felt.

HIV/AIDS is the most dangerous enemy of the human family and continues to kill millions of people around the world. At the moment, there is no preventive vaccine or medicine that can permanently cure the disease. According to the World Health Organisation, about 42 million people around the globe lived with HIV/AIDS at the end of



Muslim, Buddhist and Christian leaders at the meeting

2002. Among them, 29.4 million lived in sub-Saharan Africa, while around seven million lived in Asia and the Pacific region. If there is no proper prevention strategy, the HIV/AIDS pandemic in Asia and the Pacific could face the same problem as that of Africa.

The participants, in a statement, called on the Thai government to promote practical cooperation between interreligious organisations and the government and other non-government organisations to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of their

work. They also called on the government to legislate for the work of an interreligious network and activities in the national plan and policy of the government and to allocate necessary funds for the work of such an interreligious network.

A National Interreligious Coordinating Committee (NICC) was formed, comprising Buddhists, Christians and Muslims. Rev. Sanan Wutti of the Church of Christ in Thailand AIDS ministry was elected convener of NICC.

—Prawate Kbid-arn

Consultation on Migrant Workers

‘Churches’ response to migrant workers issues’ was the theme of a consultation organised by the Toraja church in cooperation with the Christian Conference of Asia Faith, Mission, Unity program area (CCA-FMU) in Toraja, Indonesia. The consultation, held on 1–4 July, was attended by fifty-four participants, including eighteen women.

The consultation discussed the impact of globalisation and debt in the life of migrant workers.

Case studies from people who are involved in the struggle for migrant workers’ rights were discussed and action plans were evolved.

Josef P. Widyatmadja, the executive secretary of CCA-FMU, gave an Asian perspec-

tive on the role of churches in responding to migrant issues. The advance of globalisation has witnessed a steady growth of migrant workers from Toraja to other Asian countries such as Malaysia, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Korea and Japan. It is hard to stem this flow, due to poverty in Toraja.

Ery Hutabarat, former associate general secretary of CCA, hosted the consultation.

A Jubilee of Peace

Koreans call for an end to war planning and a start to peace talks

For the past five decades, the horror of war has dominated Korea, instilling mistrust, hatred and confrontation in North and South Korea alike. This quasi-war state has frustrated efforts made to develop a peaceful Korea and a peaceful world. The era of confrontation must end now. As we mark the fiftieth anniversary of the armistice of the Korean War, we invite you to proclaim with us a Jubilee of Peace, a year marking the start of a new epoch of peace and reconciliation, coexistence and prosperity in Northeast Asia.

The peoples of Korea and the world demand that the armistice be replaced with a peace treaty as a way to end the current confrontation and build a cooperative relationship.

The peoples' wishes notwithstanding, a danger of war looms large over the Korean Peninsula at the moment. The conflict is between the US administration demanding unconditional dismantlement of 'North Korea's nuclear program' and the North Korean government refusing it for a security guarantee. Attempts to resolve this issue by threats and sanctions have only escalated the tension, leading to the de facto annulment of the 1994 Geneva agreement that had sustained a hope for a peaceful settlement of the nuclear issue. This year the tension between the two sides has ascended to an unprecedented level, making war a real possibility.

Military means cannot be a solution to the current dispute. The nuclear and security issues between North Korea and the US should and can be resolved by peaceful means. The six-nation talks on the issue, once deemed impossible to many, can be a starting point for a new direction. We, NGOs and peace groups in South Korea and around the world, make the following appeals to everyone who denounces war as a way to peace:

- The dispute between the US and North Korean governments must be resolved only by peaceful means. For this the US, North Korea and all other parties involved in the multilateral talks should engage in a dialogue with a genuine commitment to peace. Threats of containment or the use of force should be excluded from the negotiating table, as such threats have only obstructed meaningful talks in the past.
- We oppose the development, deployment or use of nuclear weapons on the Korean Peninsula. On the basis of this non-nuclear principle, we oppose North Korea's nuclear weapons programs as well as the US deployment and use of nuclear weapons in the Korean peninsula. The denuclearisation agreement of the two Koreas must be respected by all states, and the US must clearly denunciate its nuclear first-strike policy.
- The current crisis should be resolved by a package deal where the US provides for a security guarantee and the lifting of economic sanctions to North Korea in return for the North's freeze of all nuclear weapons programs. South Korea and neighbouring countries need to support and guarantee the commitments made in the package deal while North Korea is required to conduct earnest dialogues with her neighbours. Only by replacing the armistice with a peace treaty can the sources of the continued military confrontation as well as the sources of future conflict be removed once and for all.
- We believe that any policy regarding a Korean future must take into consideration the Korean people's views and hopes. It should be clearly noted that the Koreans desire no war but reconciliation, cooperation, peace building and reunification between two Koreas. We

welcome the six-party talks as a diplomatic success jointly achieved by the governments of North Korea, the US, China and others. This frame of talk should serve as a venue of resolving the prolonged conflict in such a way as to fulfil the peace wishes of the Koreans.

A deadly arms race is on the horizon in Northeast Asia. The US has adopted a nuclear first-strike posture, is promoting high-tech weapons systems such as a missile defence and is increasing its military presence in the region. Using the North Korean crisis as a justification, Japan is bolstering its military capability while dismantling legal constraints on its military activities. China and South Korea continue with their military modernisation programs. This trend should be stopped now, otherwise it will soon create an insane arms race that will doom the prospect of peace in the region and the world. We urge the governments in the region to realise the danger of this trend and to start immediately working together towards security, cooperation and disarmament. We appeal to everyone to work together for a world where peace and coprosperity prevail over war threats.

Forum of the June
Green Korea United
Korean Confederation of
Trade Unions
Korean Federation for
Environmental Movement
Korea Progressive Academy Council
Korean Professors Union
Korean Women's Associations United
National Council for Peace
on the Korean Peninsula
People's Solidarity for
Participatory Democracy
Solidarity for Peace and
Reunification of Korea
Women Making Peace

Religions of Peace

Interreligious meeting condemns religious extremism

An interreligious meeting held in Manila on 18–20 August condemned ‘all forms of extremism, oppression and terrorism’ and said that these acts are ‘direct assaults on our shared and common dignity’.

The meeting, organised on the theme ‘Seeking peace and development through an authentic Christian and Muslim dialogue of life in Asia’ was attended by 121 Muslim ulama and Christian bishops from Bangladesh, Hong Kong, Japan, India, Indonesia, Libya, Malaysia, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Taiwan, Thailand, Uzbekistan and the Philippines.

In a statement the participants called on people to promote and develop a culture of peace and resolve and transform conflict so as to create conditions for positive social change.

They acknowledged that their religions have been used and often misused for selfish and immoral motives. ‘For many centuries, religions and ideologies have been used to justify acts of discord. We must rectify this by a consistent expression of our Muslim



Muslims and Christians meet in Manila to promote and develop a culture of peace

and Christian religious values,’ they said.

‘Being all children of Abraham’, the participants described Christianity and Islam as ‘religions of peace which worship the one Merciful and Almighty God. The unity of belief in the Almighty and the common values of worship exemplified by the prophets

of God urge us to recognise the creative handiwork of Almighty God imprinted in us in our basic human dignity. We recognise that in our common dignity we also share and experience a common suffering. From the suffering of our peoples comes our call to peace,’ the participants noted.

They also pledged to continually engage each other in an authentic dialogue of life and spirituality, and concrete action among Muslims and Christians in Asia.

Earlier, Tony Waworuntu, a CCA executive secretary, expressed the need to reflect on the role of religions in building and binding communities and seeking ways on how to help people create and maintain their identities against all forms of evil forces.

He said that the yardstick of the greatness of a religion should be measured in terms of its sensitivity to tolerance and its ability to promote peace and reconciliation. He described poverty, wrong teachings of religion and misuse of religion for political ends as three of the main causes of religious extremism in the world.



Tony Waworuntu discusses the role of religion in building and binding communities

Asia-Pacific Students and Youth Week

*Blessed Are the Peacemakers—
Building Peace among Students and Youth towards Human Security*

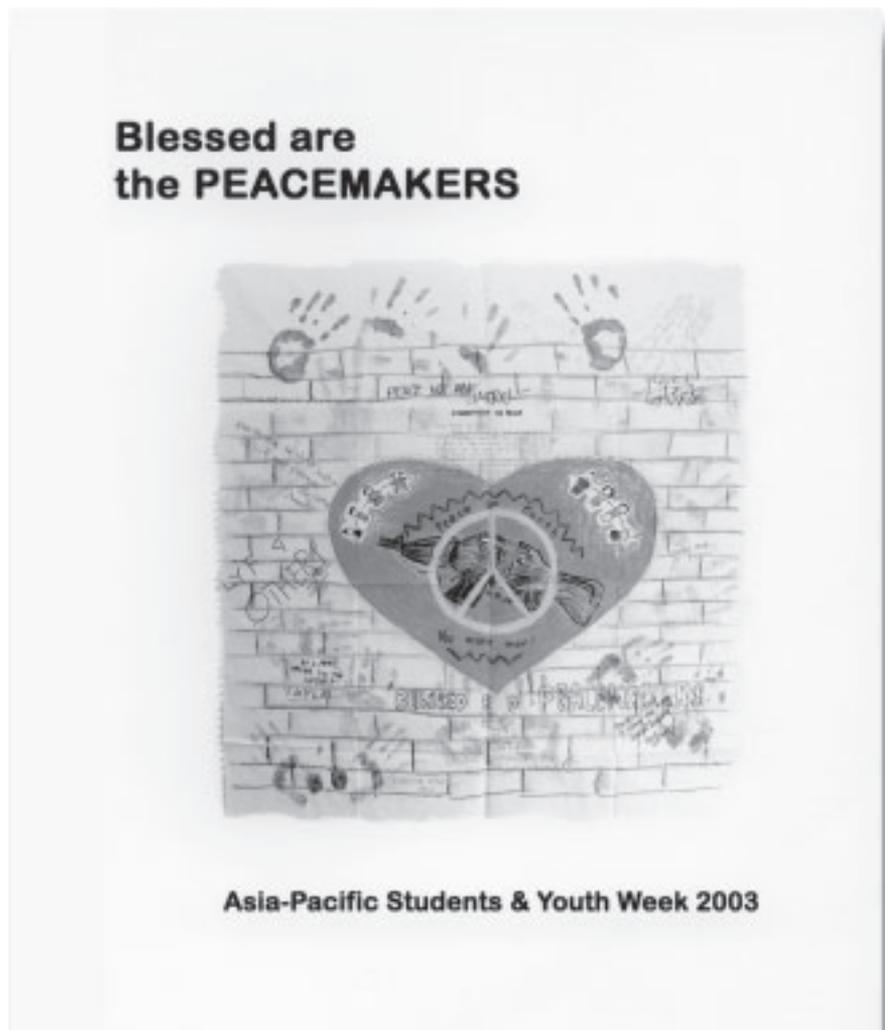
The Asia-Pacific Students and Youth Week (APSYW) is organised by the Ecumenical Asia-Pacific student and Youth Network (EASY Net). The most important aspect of APSYW is to inculcate the creative participation of local EASY Net partners and to be actively involved in the ecumenical arena. It is suggested that this program be organised in the third week of October (12–18 October).

EASY Net encourages students and youth in the region to come together to share and learn from each other's life experiences in their communities and countries. It is hoped that young people could reflect and critically review and learn about the issues affecting people, especially students and youth in the Asia-Pacific region, as they seek to understand the nature and meaning of the Christian mission in the present context.

This special week is also a time for joy and celebration as students and youth express their unity and solidarity as they make a renewed commitment to the vision that leads to the promise of a transformed community.

The theme of APSYW 2003 is 'Blessed Are the Peacemakers—Building Peace among Students and Youth towards Human Security'.

This theme was chosen in view of the crisis of the war in Iraq and conflicts in other parts of the world. It is hoped that students and youth deeply reflect not only on the injustice of war but also on how they can build a peaceful society and promote a culture of peace and justice. The hope is that we can build peaceful communities not only as nations but also as God's creation.



A resource booklet has been published by EASY Net, which contains poems, liturgies, prayers and reflections for use in the week. It is a significant fruit from all the participants who contributed in different

ways. Originally a regional workshop in Taiwan was planned, but this was disrupted by the outbreak of SARS. So local workshops in different countries, student and youth communities contributed to the process.

Living Together through WEAVE

Dominica Faurillo

WEAVE is an acronym for Women's Ecumenical Accompaniment for Vision and Empowerment. It was born out of an expressed need of the Kampuchea Christian Council and a willingness of the National Council of Churches in the Philippines to help. The idea came out from an informal sharing between CCA-EGY staff Cora Tabing-Reyes, NCCP general secretary Sharon Rose Joy Ruiz-Duremdes and the Kampuchea Christian Council team coordinator Eang Chhun.

According to its working paper, WEAVE 'is a way of working out a vision of gender justice and for empowerment of women in the ecumenical movement ... It images the creative work of women, creating colourful patterns drawn from relationships with all of creation, communicating their life stories, struggles, dreams and aspirations. It expresses solidarity among women from different countries. It also images the diversity of strands of life—culture, religion, spirituality, ideology, geographical setting, ethnicity and many more differences that can be woven beautifully to make a beautiful pattern for humanity and creation. It aims at fostering partnership among CCA member councils in enhancing ecumenical women's leadership development and capacity building in serving church and community within the partnership of women and men in church and society.'

This is especially for CCA members that need special attention in terms of capacity building to work for the 'fullness of life'. It is part of the Ecumenical Sharing and Capacity Building (ESCB) program that was approved during the CCA Executive Committee meeting in Kuala Lumpur on 31 November – 2 December 2002.

This the first WEAVE project. It is my privilege to be the first ecumenical accompanier. My term commenced on 1 February 2003. As a start, allow me to rephrase the meaning of WEAVE in a simple poem.

Women of all ages, the girl child, the lass, the teenager, adult, retiree, elderly

Ecumenically embracing in fellowship whatever your race, creed, colour and status may be,

Accompanying one another, going together hand in hand, not ahead, not behind, reaching for a

Vision—the dream we want to be— free, equal and in partnership with men in God's kingdom

Empowering, affirming, demonstrating, transforming all of creation for God's reign.

The Call and Sending Off

First, I thank our God for calling me to serve in Cambodia. Whatever the task is called, for me it was a mission and a call. I did not expect it. I was already enjoying a modest

compensation pay from the social security system, working as program coordinator of my conference, the United Metropolis Conference of the United Church of Christ in the Philippines. I belonged to a number of organisations: Happy Valley Neighbourhood Organisation (auditor), Diakonia Philippines (member, board of trustees), Diakonia United Metropolis, Ellinwood College Alumni Association (secretary), Metro Manila Regional Ecumenical Council (secretary) and, of course, the Women's Ecumenical Forum and other non-government organisations. I was actively involved with these organisations, two of which are directly under the National Council of Churches in the Philippines, of which my church is a member. Included in my responsibilities were editing the newsletter of Diakonia Philippines, and helping in the writing of Sunday school materials for my church. I was also in the middle of writing my thesis, which was required to complete my Master of Ministry with the Theological Education by Extension of Union Theological Seminary in Cavite.



Dominica, fourth from left, with rural credit coordinators in a Cambodian village

I belong to a church which is evangelical, ecumenical, priestly, prophetic and does God's mission in serving the less privileged and marginalised. In its policy on ecumenical relations, it says, 'The UCCP is open to the spirit of new ecumenism which goes beyond the traditional denominational lines. This new ecumenism has come out of the church's ministry in identity and solidarity with the people's struggle for justice, peace and freedom. Its main objective is the restoration of the individual to full humanity and the transformation of society to usher in the Reign of God.' Its members live out its description. I am one of those who actively participate in the business of shouting chants in the streets in order to get the attention of the powers that be so that the voice of the weak can be heard. My church and my country have their own struggles.

The call came at a time when I was in the process of being healed from brokenness and self-pity. I was called from a busy and active life. This is the life that I brought to Cambodia. This is the life that I was going to share. This is the strand that I was going to weave into the lives of women and men in this part of the world.

I was not alone. In all of these organisations where I belong, my sisters and brothers fared me well. Everyone blessed me with their smiles, their words of encouragement and their prayers. I still remember what Jane said to me, 'Be yourself.' The spirit of these women and men came with me. With eagerness and inspiration they gave me the courage to plunge into this venture. I was going to a place famous for its killing fields

and buried landmines. I had never seen a Cambodian then. I knew that the Great Spirit hovered above me as women touched me with oil, and men prayed their 'sending forth' for me. It was an adventure.

Something beautiful, something good
All my confusion he understood,
All I had to offer him was brokenness
and pain,
But he made something beautiful of my
life.

(Bill and Gloria Gaither)

The Discovery and Acceptance

My first sight of Cambodia touched my heart. It opened towards a wider realm of patriotic sentiment. As the plane was manoeuvring to alight, I saw palm leaves—thatch cottages that seemed like small matchboxes, scattered in groups. It was beautiful. Patches of mango and coconut trees added to its splendour. I remembered something written by Pablo Casals: 'The love of one's country is a splendid thing. But why should love stop at the border?' That time, my love for the Philippines was deep as ever. At the airport, Uy Dy, the KCC Administrative Secretary, Rev. Eang Chhun, team coordinator, Si Ma, the driver, the Bartes family who are missionaries of the General Board of Global Mission—Beverly, Emmanuel, Eusteen, and Junjun—were there to meet me, waving a placard. I instantly felt 'at home'.

I want to describe Cambodia this way. We were going to visit the villages in Kampong Cham and Kampong Thom where the rural credit and the kindergarten

projects of CCWD were located. At 7 am we were at the intersection of Mao Tse Tung Boulevard and Confederacion de la Russie. The traffic was beautiful. Instead of cars, jeeps and buses, we saw beautiful heads gliding on motorcycles and bicycles. They were the heads of students, workers, employees, teachers and vendors, some with vegetables in carts in front of their motorbikes. Colourful. Students in uniform, in different colours of hats and helmets. Only a few trucks dominated the road, which on their beeps made the motorcycles scamper to the side of the street. We passed through Cambodia-Japanese Friendship Bridge, and crossed Tonle Sap River, winding towards Siem Riep, where the world-renowned Angkor Wat is located.

The terrain of Cambodia is like the Philippines. It was like going to Nueva Ecija. There were camachile, aratiles, acacia, menthol, star apple (which Cambodians call milk fruit) tamarind and mango trees. There was a cotton tree, bananas, coconuts and a lot of palm and umbrella trees. Corn and sugarcane fields abounded. At our right was the famous Mekong River, winding its way to Vietnam and towards China. We passed by a school where lots of bicycles and motorbikes were parked in the yard. There was a Muslim mosque and lots of Buddhist pagodas. There were lotus fields full of flowers and fruits.

Cambodians are loving and caring people. They are gentle, patient and accommodating, because they have also had a long history of colonisation. They are independent. They are trusting and trustworthy. The motorists, particularly on motorbikes and bicycles, trust that those behind them won't hit them. They just glide along their way, even against the flow of the traffic.

The women of Cambodia are beautiful, kind, talented and capable. They only need more confidence and willingness to lead. Some of them had undergone training. Some of them are holding key positions in the government and in NGOs. Arun Rasmey, one of the executive committee members, is working with the Christian Reformed World Relief Committee. They are just waiting for the right time to blossom and bear fruit to become leaders. They need a little pat and



Delegates to the General Gathering of Women

push. They are mothers, wives, sisters, grandparents and daughters who have the same predicament as women all over the world. They are invisible and they need to be empowered. They need cognisance. While there are women who enjoy the leadership of the church, there are those who have not been told, 'You can do it.' They only need forceful and loving encouragement to lead on.

Yes, the killing fields. The sight is very heartbreaking. Millions of skulls and bones of victims are arranged according to their ages in a multi-storey monument. I tried to touch one skull. It was very smooth. In the General Gathering of Women, everyone had their share of painful experiences. There, one of the women said, 'I was only ten years old. When we were running away with my family, I got lost in the way. Then I saw a soldier cut the stomach of a person.' She did not tell anyone for fear they might also kill her. When she was able to return, her parents were in Toul Sleng prison. She found her younger brothers, who were sick. She had to find food for them. She gathered shells in the river to sustain them. Her brother died. Miraculously, her parents were spared.

Priep Sina, the chairperson of the women's committee told another story. Her father, a doctor, was killed just because he belonged to the nobility. They are devastated in spirit and soul. However, their favourite word is 'forgiveness'. Rev. Eang Chhun said, 'We have forgiven the perpetrators. If we don't forgive them, their sins will come back to us.'

The **Kampuchea Christian Council** is a new member of the Christian Conference of Asia. It was given full membership on 2 June 2000 at the opening session of the 11th General Assembly held in Tomohon, North Sulawesi, Indonesia. The KCC team coordinator was appointed with a committee of five persons, all ministers of the Gospel. Now, after the general assembly, the executive committee consists of two women, two youth, six pastors and a layman.

The **Women's Desk** was the main reason for my coming. It started as a prayer group of women in 1993. It became a recognised NGO in 1994 as the Cambodian

Christian Women's Association. It started many programs for the development of women. It helped change the lives of many men and women, who benefited from the literacy program, the rural credit program, sewing and weaving classes and rural credit. They were in unity with Cambodian Christian churches in their participation in the reconstruction of Cambodian society. In 2002 the women's association became a desk of the Kampuchea Christian Council.

The **Youth Desk** is one of the priority concerns of KCC. The youth are very eager to learn. The leadership training for youth and the Sunday school teachers training were clear evidence for their thirst for new knowledge. They are uncomplaining and very receptive to suggestions. They need to be exposed to other church youth situations. I admire and adore them.

The **children** are so innocent. They need the right methods of leading them to Christ. KCC, with the assistance of the Women's Desk, organised a training for Sunday school teachers. This is for the children's cause.

KCC is composed of more or less 100 diverse congregations, not denominations. As of now, only twenty-five churches had completed membership forms, only lately formally implemented. At the start of its becoming a member of CCA, it suffered severe setbacks. It had undergone a series of trials and pain. Its growth was stunted. Its programs had almost stopped. But its hopes and faith did not diminish. A few concerned people struggled on with the kind efforts of Tony Waworuntu and George Mathews. Now they are starting a new leaf in their ecumenical life. The Women's Desk has started projects lately neglected.

I instantly loved KCC. It is not difficult to love this organisation of committed Christian women and men. They are persons who have their uniqueness, but there is no great difference between them and my own people. They accepted me as their own. They are supportive to suggestions and presentations that I make. I love the surroundings. I like the ambience of my office. Its window faces the front gate. At my computer, I just have to turn a little to the left to see anyone coming in. To my right is my table, facing

the door of the office. I have a full view of the surroundings. In the morning, a little ray of sunshine kisses my computer while a gentle breeze flaps the curtain. There is just enough air and light (so no need for electric light). I am so glad, everything is sufficient for me. I thank God. Now, as a project of the women, the place is beautiful and ecologically balanced with assorted plants, like the rose, sampaguita and gumamela, dama de noche and others.

The mines that I discovered were not landmines, but goldmines in the hearts of people. In their hearts beats readiness to forgive. 'Man-ayte' (it's all right) is a well-loved word. They have the courage to defy the will of their parents, culture and tradition in order to follow Christ. As healed people they had become healers for Christ. Their commitment to Christ is expressed in prayers and action to help their people in the development of their country. They live in loving unity. Despite the differences in their way of worship and administration, they come together. On Sophal, one of the women members of the executive committee says, 'We all believe in Jesus Christ.'

Living Together

When I was a child, my mother used to weave our own dresses, linens, towels and curtains. I loved to watch her as the different strands of thread with different colours were interwoven into intricate patterns.

The red, the white, the blue in long strands delicately arranged and rolled within the length of the loom while, in a rhythm of 'plik-plak, plik-plak', threads of the same colours would be interwoven across. The design would become zigzag, stripes, squares or rectangular patterns according to the artistry of my mother's creative fingers in preparing the different knick-knacks of the loom. The threads must not be too loose or tight. They bend with equal pressure to be woven into one. There was a complete intertwining of the threads. It was beautiful.

Living together is complete intertwining of lives. During the General Gathering of Women, we shared our 'Rivers of Life'. It is the participants revealed their pains and joys. Together, we recalled the

past pains and offered them to God. We planned and, like a new plant, we pledged to take care and enliven the Women's Desk in its new setting as part of KCC. This was only possible because our threads of life were truly blended with one another.

Living together is faith and trust. First is faith in God. Trust in God. God didn't call me into service in which I am not capable. I believe he had prepared me from the womb of my mother. Second is faith and trust in myself. Knowing myself, I know I was called, and in humility I seek God's guidance and grace. It is coming home to myself. It is bringing out into action all that I am, my faith, my upbringing, my training and experiences. Third is my faith and trust in the Cambodian Christian community. Cambodia is my Galilee. Jesus had gone there before me (Matthew 28:9). They won't let me down. They will support me as their sister, mother and daughter.

Living together is acceptance and belongingness. It is leaving my family behind and finding that I belong to a larger family within the fold of Christian love. (Luke 8:21, Mark 3:34, 35) It is singing the same tune (only singing the notes because I can't read and understand the lyrics). It is listening to sermons I cannot decipher. It is eating the same native dish. It is laughing, not because I understand the joke, but because everyone is laughing. It is hugging someone who confesses she has HIV/AIDS. It is listening to someone's heartaches and crying with her.

Living together is wisdom and compassion. Wisdom is to discern and compassion is to resolve. Wisdom is done in aloneness but compassion can only be done in togetherness. Wisdom leaves you alone in your thoughts, while compassion is a participatory entanglement with others' lives. It is involved in the resolution to attain a common goal and vision. In the workshop on the vision, mission and goal of the Women's Desk, we had a good time weighing and deciding about its vision, mission and goal. Everyone took part. We remembered the innkeeper who took care of the injured person while waiting for the 'Good Samaritan' to return (Luke 10:33-35). It is this compassion that pushes me to stir

up the women in their complacency and submissiveness to the dictates of culture and tradition (Luke 11:33). In order to be 'innkeepers', they need the skill. It is capability building. We have had an introductory women's spirituality and empowerment seminar. Coming next are women's spirituality and human rights in daily life, ecology, facilitation skills training and preparing project proposals. The English class is done twice a week.

Living together is transformation. It is restoring the whole person into integration with oneself, with God, humanity and the whole creation. It is luminosity of the mind, body and soul. It is dying to oneself and resurrecting into the realm of others' lives. It is your 'being' in praxis. (Luke 4: 18, 19). One life joined to another life makes a different personality. It becomes a different structure. It is transformed.

It is forgetting one's selfish ambition and comfort and taking into oneself the needs of others. It is changing the 'should be' into 'it is' in harmony with the here and now. It is putting biases aside. It is turning from a loner to a gregarious one. One can't be a loner when there are people who need attention. It is turning a frown into a smile. It is turning a barren KCC compound into a lush, beautiful garden.

Living together is being alive. It is a living experience of the spirit merging with other spirits with the intervention of the Great Spirit beyond. Being alive means doing all that promotes life, a life that is abundant. It is the spirit in fruition. It is

participating in the realisation of God's reign, which is present in every person. Being alive is touching the lives of others. It is a life that contaminates, a life that perpetuates (John 10:10). When it contaminates, it gives off a portion of itself that will remain. The colour and the beauty might not be seen but still it is felt. Like this poem,

A Persian fable says: one day,
A wanderer found a lump of clay
So redolent of sweet perfume,
Its odours scented all the room.
'What art thou?' was his quick
demand,
'Art thou some gem from Samarkand,
Or spikenard in this rude disguise,
Or other costly merchandise?'
'Nay, I am but a lump of clay.'
'Then whence this wondrous
perfume—say!'
'Friend, if the secret I disclose,
I have been dwelling with the rose.'

(author unknown)

Sharing life is sharing a powerful scent, like the rose that is steadily bestowing fragrance in the air. It is my desire and my prayer that after my term, my brothers and sisters of KCC will be able to say, 'Friend, if the secret we disclose, we have been dwelling with the rose.'

In God's time, all things are made beautiful. The lives that we weave together are in different colours and designs. They have different structures and nature. God is the weaver. God chooses the strands, God provides the colours. And, in the right time, God will make everything beautiful.



Women working in groups to plan for the future

Ecumenical Horticulture

Joint Program Area Committees Meeting

Dr Ahn Jae Woong, CCA general secretary, has called for a 're-invention' of the ecumenical movement using the image of an ecumenical horticulture. Ecumenical horticulture, he said, meant processes of planting new seeds, watering a new spirit, fertilising a new energy, nurturing new branches and harvesting new fruits of *oikoumene*.

Speaking at the Joint Program Area Committees meeting in Cipayung, Indonesia, on 21–26 June, Ahn said, 'Ecumenical horticulture should be concerned about the good life of the whole creation and this is built upon God's golden rule of love for God above all and love of neighbour as oneself.'

The program areas of General Secretariat (GS), Faith, Mission and Unity (FMU), Justice, International Affairs, Development and Service (JID) and Ecumenical Formation, Gender Justice and Youth Empowerment (EGY) evaluated the past programs of CCA under their respective clusters. The Program Area Committee (PAC) members affirmed that there has been increased



The Joint Program Area Committees meeting in session

ownership of CCA programs by member churches and councils, there is more gender and youth representation and there has been clear indication of trying to balance quality and quantity of programs.

One concern raised at the plenary session for all PACs is the need to be more intentional in the use of methodology that would also model the themes of the program—this is to affirm that methodology is just as important as the contents of the programs. Leading the daily Bible studies were representatives of the three program areas: Rev. Dr Albert Sundararaj Walters (Faith, Mission and Unity), Ms Amie Dural and Mr Lesley Capus (Ecumenical Formation, Gender Justice and Youth Empowerment) and Rev. Toshimasa Yamamoto (Justice, International Affairs, Development and Service). Other small meetings held prior to the JPAC meeting were those of the CCA-FABC Relations Committee, CCA-WCC Liaison Group, CCA officers, the Personnel Committee and the Executive Committee.

The meeting was fully hosted by the Gereja Protestan di Indonesia bagian Barat (GPIB), led by Rev. R.A. Waney, chair of GPIB, and supported by the Communion of Churches in Indonesia, led by the General Secretary, Rev. Dr Izak P. Lambe.



CCA-WCC Liaison Group and representatives of CCA-FABC Relations Committee

CCA Appointments



Philip Mathew

Philip Mathew, a journalist from Bangalore, India, has been appointed the communication consultant of the CCA from 1 August. Mathew is a former managing editor, publisher and printer of the *People's Reporter*.

A member of the Mar Thoma church, Mathew joined the national office of the Student Christian Movement of India as program secretary after his postgraduate studies in political science in 1978. From 1981 to 1987, he was on the staff of the Christian Institute for the Study of Religion and Society, where his work, among others, involved editing and publishing *Samata*, a journal of the caste-class studies program of the institute. In 1988 he, along with others, started the *People's Reporter*, a paper of current affairs, where he worked for eleven years.

Among the several ecumenical events he attended are the previous four assemblies of the CCA and the two assemblies of the WCC.

He has covered three central committee meetings of the WCC for *People's Reporter* and other publications. He has also written for the Asian Ecumenical News Service (now defunct), Ecumenical News International and the South Asia Religious News. He has been reporting for the Union of Catholic Asian News since 1993.

He co-edited and published *Religion, Ideology and Counter-Culture* in honour of the Jesuit theologian Fr Sebastian Kappen in 1987.

Philip Mathew has been associated with several non-governmental organisations. He

is one of the founders of the Indian National Social Action Forum. In 1985 he set up the Centre for Indian Migrants Abroad and has been a member of the International Coalition to Ban the Use of Child Soldiers. He became the general secretary of the Christian Union of India in 1998 and played an important role in starting the communication department of the National Council of Churches in India in Nagpur.

Mathew has completed several print and electronic media-related courses and training programs.

He is planning to complete a master's program in human rights next year.



Rakesh Peter Das

The general committee has appointed Rakesh Peter Das as joint executive secretary of the Ecumenical Formation, Gender Justice and Youth Empowerment program area till the end of 2005. This appointment is retroactive to when Peter joined CCA in January 2002.

Rakesh, from Madhya Pradesh, India, is a member of the Evangelical Lutheran Church. He holds degrees in commerce and business administration from Nagpur University, with specialisation in human resource management and development. He also has diplomas in network-centred computing and in international trade. He is currently engaged in theological studies with the University of London.

Rakesh has passion, experience, commitment and vision to the work of youth empowerment and ecumenical formation within the churches in Asia and beyond.



Hope Antone

The CCA general committee has appointed Dr Hope S. Antone as joint executive secretary for the Faith, Mission and Unity program area, effective 1 August. Prior to this, Hope served as CCA communication consultant.

Hope hails from the Philippines and is a member of the United Church of Christ in the Philippines. She holds degrees in mass communication and New Testament studies, and a doctorate in religious education.

Hope has taught Christian education at Silliman University Divinity School and Lutheran Theological Seminary in Hong Kong. She also taught feminist theologies at Union Theological Seminary in the Philippines and Ewha Institute of Women's Theological Studies in Seoul. She has edited several publications, including the Asian Women's Resource Centre for Culture and Theology's feminist theological journal, *In God's Image*. Her updated doctoral thesis was published early this year as a book *Religious Education in Context of Plurality and Pluralism*.

Youth Interns

Kasta Dip, 29, from Orissa, India, has been selected as a CCA youth intern for 2003–04. A member of the Church of North India, he was selected out of twenty-one applicants.

Ejodia Kakoensi, 31, from Indonesia is the first appointment to the position of CCA young women's intern. She is a member of the Evangelical Christian Church in Minahasa. Six applications were received for this internship.

A Journey in Ecumenical Learning

Asia Ecumenical Academy meets in Bangkok

The Asia Ecumenical Academy (AEA) was held during 3–23 August 2003 in Bangkok, Thailand.

Seventeen participants from nine Asia-Pacific countries journeyed together to be equipped as ecumenical leaders enhanced in their rethinking of peace issues, interfaith relations and cooperation and the ecumenical movement.

Challenged during the opening message of Dr Ahn Jae Woong and inspired by the director, Dr Preman Niles, they engaged in building a community of ecumenical learners. They went through the process of studying together with the resource persons for each week: Dr Ninan Koshy on 'Peace and Security in the Context of Globalisation and the War on Terror', Dr Rose Wu on 'Asian Women Resisting Violence and Building Communities', Dr Archie Lee on 'Biblical-Theological Basis for Interfaith Relations and Cooperation', Dr Einar Sitompul on 'Muslim-Christian Relations and Cooperation', Prof. Sulak Sivaraksa on 'Buddhist-Christian Relations and Cooperation', and Rev. David Gill on 'The Ecumenical Movement: WCC-CCA Perspective'. Fr Tom Michel of FABC and Dr Kyaw Than shared in the deepening of discussions during the second and third weeks respectively.

In a participatory way, the ecumenical learners also gave presentations drawn from their own respective contexts relevant to the issue being studied each week. Then the participants went into small group workshops to work on agreed parts of a report. An editorial team painstakingly put together the written parts into a cohesive document, done with a lot of support from others who stayed up late in solidarity, singing to them background music and providing food in the



AEA participants

middle of the night. Undergirded by ecumenical spirituality, they learned and worked together both in the conference room and in the exposure areas with openness, respect and understanding—overcoming the barrier of language. They finished three documents they will use to open up discussions in their church and communities as their post-AEA commit-

ment: 'One World, One Market: Disaster?', 'Let the Silence Voice Out, Set Me Free', and 'A Moment with People of Other Faiths', together with affirmations on the 'Ecumenical Movement Today'.

It was not such a long journey but it was a deepening of commitment to the ecumenical tasks of searching for fullness of life for all.



Theological group reflection

Footsteps to New Horizons

The Protestant Church in West Indonesia

History

Each church has a past. GPIB, or the Protestant Church in West Indonesia, is the result of footsteps made long before its institution in 1948. The footsteps can be traced back to the days of the United East Indies Company ('Verenigde Oostindische Compagnie', or VOC), established in 1602 and closed down in 1795, and the synod meetings at Dordrecht in 1618 and 1619, which issued article 36, stating that 'the function of the government is not only for the welfare in general, but also for the protection of church worship, for the annihilation of false religions, for the overthrow of the kingdom of antichrist, for the promotion of the kingdom of Christ and the promulgation of the gospel'. The VOC became the agent of the church's edict overseas, like in the rest of the Indonesian archipelago.

The eighteenth century was a turning point, when missionary institutions took the initiative to spread the gospel overseas, driven by the spirit of *pietism* revival. That era has been called the era of enlightenment, in which we also had the French Revolution (1789) with the aims of 'liberté, fraternité, égalité', ('liberty, brotherhood, equality'). There was a reconsideration of the authority of the state: it should not interfere in religious affairs—it should be 'neutral', there should be freedom of religion, there should be no more a state church and the state should no more take sides for the church. It seems that this stand gave impetus to missionary institutions. Nevertheless the Dutch could not implement these ideals overseas

because of the existence of congregations scattered all over the archipelago ever since the time of the VOC rule, and because of the enmity of other beliefs against the Dutch rule. Therefore church life overseas was not yet liberated from state control.

King Willem I (1814–1840) established the Protestant Church in Netherlands Indies, later called the Protestant Church in Indonesia (abbreviated in Indonesian to GPI). He initiated that church by decree in 1820, and it was reformulated in 1835 due to the unification of the Reformed congregations and the Lutherans. Again the church was tied up with the state administratively and financially. The salary of the pastors was paid by the government and the governor-general appointed them in their positions. (Note that during 1811–1816 the archipelago was under British rule with A.O. Raffles as governor). GPI was under the direction of a church council or 'kerkbestuur', appointed by the government, while the local congregation was led by a local council elected by the congregation. At that time, the church building at the centre of the capital, Batavia, now called Jakarta, was called 'Willems-kerk' (now it has the name 'Immanuel'). Notwithstanding this tie the GPI also had relationships with the missionary bodies and so had not forgotten her missionary calling.

Twentieth Century

At last there came the separation between church and state, first administratively in 1935, and then on 1 February 1950,



financially, ironically pronounced by the first president of the Republic of Indonesia. At the third Assembly of the GPI, on 30 May – 10 June 1948 at Bogor, a resolution was taken ‘to integrate all congregations outside the Minahassa region, the Moluccas and the Timor islands into a church institution, called GPIB. We now have now four churches within the GPI, established successively: GMIM in 1934, GPM in 1935, GMTI in 1947 and GPIB in 1948, three years after the proclamation of independence of Indonesia (17 August 1945), and two years before the founding of the Communion of Churches in Indonesia (May 1950). So nationalistic aspirations for independence and ecumenical ideas were indeed a driving inspirations for GPIB, which had led it through a journey of experiences, or footsteps. GPIB still follows the footsteps of the Head of the church through various influences, which have had quite an impact on it. It has grown out of the struggles it was involved in.

As a church, GPIB has had to learn from former, maybe awkward, experiences and involvements, and so pave new ways that became the footsteps into a new era. It has wrestled to formulate the church’s rules and regulations to face new conditions. It had to have its own confession next to the Apostolic Creed, again as a response to environmental developments, evolving speedily and often unexpectedly. It passed the era of the ‘Old Order’ (1945–1965), the era of the ‘New Order’ (1965–1998) and the era of what is called ‘Reformation’ (1998 to the present) with a strong motivation for democratisation and human rights, and also the thrust of religious awakening in all aspects of social life. The ideals of unity between religion and state have re-emerged, a kind of ‘theocracy’ as in the early days. These ideals are not new. They were already there when the nation was born. The principle that has been accepted as a consensus was formulated in a motto: ‘Unity in Diversity’, commonly called the ‘Pancasila’ (‘Five Pillars’). We shall see whether the ideals of the founding fathers will last with the spirit of inclusiveness or the religious thrust with a kind of exclusiveness. Violences in several areas indicate the seriousness of that kind of thrust.

GPIB realises that it has to go in unity. It was one of the founders of the CCI. It is aware that it has an inbuilt ecumenical setup, comprising members coming from a variety of regional, cultural and ecclesiastical backgrounds. It has been a member of the WCC since 1991, and is also a member of CCA and WARC. In that way it participates in ecumenical actions to respond together to the challenges of the time. It is actively engaged in missionary activities deep inland and in remote islands, especially under the leadership of women, organised through the Department of Service and Witness, and with the participation of the congregations through their Commission of Service and Witness. It has to cover more than twenty provinces and therefore needs support and full participation. It has ordained women pastors since its inception, though not without problems re-

lated to marriage and family. A just treatment of married and not-married personnel and a wise distribution of human resources have to be applied. The church needs a corps of personnel who have a wholehearted dedication for the Lord’s calling, performed in harmonious teamwork with colleagues to encounter a world of global engagement and competition and also the religious exclusiveness of today.

Full participation of all the members means setting up a network of functions and coordination to engender initiatives and to enhance the quality of working together. Therefore a basic platform has to be agreed upon. The ‘presbyterial synodal’ platform has been chosen, which through the years has proven to be the common ground for caring, sharing and meeting of minds. The presbyters are those who are ordained: deacons, elders, pastors, constituting the council at the local and synodal level. They make decisions, set up policies and procedures, and once every five years they have a synod assembly for elections and to set new guidelines and plans. That is the ‘way together’ as the Greek explains: *bodos* is the ‘way’ and *syn* (there seems to be no equivalent for the Greek pronunciation) is ‘together’. We do not follow the hierarchical structures of the Dutch times. We determine what is best for praying, planning and working together.

We have to close these images of footsteps past and present. The archipelago of Indonesia was commonly known as ‘the girdle of emerald’. At the capital of this emerald girdle, at the birth of GPIB, we see once again the portrait of our church through the sermon of the vice chairman of the first synod council, Rev. B.A. Supit, on Reformation Day, 31 October, 1948: ‘There is no other church as this church, consisting of people from various nations and tribes, coming from several independent churches ... with a variety of traditions and languages. These factors will indeed cause tensions in this church, but hopefully will not cause separation. Therefore we have to learn as a church standing on the one and only ground: “One Lord, one faith, one baptism.” (Ephesians 4:5)

‘The church is like a ship with all its instruments, the rules and regulations. It has passengers amounting to 200,000 people ... It will surely encounter dangers when it goes to sail. Therefore we have to be on alert and be careful. Our passage says: “If you do not go with us, don’t make us leave this place.” (Exodus 33:15, TEV) ... That confession of Moses can be applied to us as a church ... And at the departure of this ship called GPIB, our prayer should be: “O Lord, strengthen our faith!”’

When you come closer to the horizon, that line falls back again, as if unreachable. So is also our common calling, it is unending, and we have to walk together again, making footsteps into the future, presenting ‘shalom’, so he who is the Way will be glorified.

—O.E. Ch. Wuwungan

Living Reminders for 'Peace'

Mark 4:35–41

Toshimasa Yamamoto

Background of the Story

Jesus sometimes would get into a boat and head away from the shore in order to be free of the demands of the crowd, who now followed him in great numbers. On this particular day he was weary from his work and from arguing with the scribes, who constantly took issue with his pronouncements. He was on the Sea of Galilee, also known as Lake Gennesaret. The lake was about 13 km wide and 19 km long, so it would take at least an hour to make the crossing. Because of his weariness Jesus lay down on a cushion in the rear of the boat and was soon sound asleep. A violent storm arose. This was typical of the lake of Galilee. Situated as it was at the foot of mountains, the two sides of the mountains served as a funnel to carry strong winds sweeping down on the lake and violently agitating its waters. This storm filled the boat with water and threatened to drown the occupants. Overcome by panic, the disciples tried to wake up the sleeping Jesus. They asked Jesus if he did not even care if they all perished. Jesus stood up and said, 'Peace,' and, 'Be still.' Then, Jesus turned to the disciples and said, 'Why are you such cowards? Do you not yet have faith?' Amazingly, the storm stopped. The disciples expressed their awe at this miracle. It proved the power of Christ, even over nature.

Sudden Storm and the CCA Ecumenical Boat

Many ecumenical organisations such as the WCC and many national councils use the symbol of a 'ship' or a 'boat' to signify the Greek words *oikoumene* and *oikos*—house of all the inhabited world.

On that day at Lake Galilee, Simon was probably in control of the boat. He was the oldest, plus it was his boat. He had sailed the waters so often and usually at night because that is when most of the fishing took place. In control of the CCA ecumenical boat is Dr Ahn Jae Woong. Prawate, Josef, Tony and Rakesh pushed away from the shore, a

shore still crowded with the men, women and children in Asia who had come to hear CCA's involvement in their own village. It may have been Hope and her husband, Beng Seng, the communication staff, who were listening to the stories of village people till the last minute, and then were the last ones to jump into the boat. Soon a small sail was raised. Soon the noise of the crowd was gone. Soon the rocking sea quieted all the CCA staff and allowed Jesus to dip his head in sleep. Soon the glow of the sun was gone. It was a peaceful time and some of the CCA staff also started sleeping along with Jesus. Tony was already snoring. But then, all of a sudden, there are storms.

A storm of financial crisis, with many of the European donor agencies deciding not to continue their financial support to the CCA programs! A storm of war, as US decides to attack DPRK (North Korea), a pre-emptive strike in line with the Bush Doctrine, because DPRK never gave up their nuclear development program! A storm of political persecution—many Christians and churches coming under attack in Pakistan, Indonesia and Myanmar because they are against their government's policy! Of course, all these storms are hypothetical but any could happen in this day and age.

In these storms, Dr Ahn's voice is not as steady, which quickened a sense



of fear among the other staff. Soon Dr Ahn's voice was not even heard, nor hearable. Cora, known as a worship leader, suggested singing a hymn and offering liturgical movement, but everyone's face showed terror in the face of the storm. In the midst of that great danger, Jesus is calmly at rest.

'Peace', 'Be Still' and 'Shalom'

At one time or another, all of us are afloat on a troubled sea. Worry. Uncertainty. Tangled troubles. Fear. We want the Jesus to wake up! We want him to quiet the churning waters all around us. We want him to solve our problems! We're seasick with worry, with pain, with tension, with fear. 'Wake up, Jesus. We're in trouble. Save us!'

Jesus spoke to the storm and it quietened. He said, 'Peace. Be still.' And, writes Mark, 'there was a great calm'. In our modern, scientific way of thinking we do not easily understand all this. Storms upon seas are caused by wind currents, temperature differences and open spaces. Storms just are not controlled by a shout from the back end of a boat. But that is the recounting that Mark gives, just like Matthew (8:18) and Luke (8:22). Another way to look at the text is to say that Jesus calmed his disciples so that they could then tackle the storm! That may have been Jesus' greater power.

'Peace,' said Jesus. 'Be still!'

The conventional 'peace' is usually understood as the antithesis of war, namely the absence of war. Peace demonstrations promote this kind of peace. The characters for peace are pronounced 'heiwa' in Japan. The first character (hei) means 'the balance of heaven and earth'. The second character (wa) is made up of two parts, 'rice' and 'mouth'. If there is enough rice for all the mouths of the world we will have a peace. This is the reason why it is so important for us to provide food to starving people in the world. The concept of peace includes equality and justice. However, if we look at the concept of the Japanese character of peace from a different angle, it could be said to mean 'rice in the mouth keeps the mouth shut'. In this, I am referring to using food as a weapon. If a ruthless dictator makes sure that his or her subjects are fed and

threatens to take that food away if they resist him or her, the people may choose to keep their mouths shut in order to preserve 'heiwa'. This 'peace' refers to reducing unrest and damages, under the control of the present regime, including the use of violence. The Pax Romana and the present Pax Americana provide relative tranquillity of 'peace' within the large empire and global economic order. Is it better to be alive and oppressed, than liberated and dead?

The Hebrew concept of 'shalom' means not only the reduction of conflict but rightness and wholeness. Shalom is not only peace but also justice. The vision of Isaiah 2 and Micah 4 promises that peoples will 'no longer learn war' because 'the oracle of Yahweh will go out from Jerusalem'. Shalom as fulfilled in the work of Jesus Christ is what the apostles called good news.

The German theologian Bonhoeffer was searching for shalom. Given the situation in Germany during World War II, he probably would have stayed alive longer if he had chosen to just keep his mouth shut like many of the religious leaders did that time. That would have given him 'heiwa' with his nation, but not 'shalom' in his heart. After painful consideration, Bonhoeffer chose to actively participate in a conspiracy to assassinate Adolph Hitler.

Bonhoeffer was not a murderer by nature. He hated killing. But he couldn't just stand back and watch his government systematically kill Jews and other minorities while he was quietly teaching at his seminary. The churches were striving to maintain harmony with the government. That was survival. Keep your mouth shut, and you will survive.

Bonhoeffer needed shalom, for himself, and for the oppressed millions, both those being murdered, and those brainwashed into believing that Hitler was their saviour who would bring them prosperity in return for their devotion.

Micah 6:8 says that we have a responsibility to do justice, to love kindness and to walk humbly with our God. When we have discussions about peace, we need to take this very seriously. There is no 'justifiable war' or 'just war' in the light of the vision of shalom.

God's Presence in the Midst of Storms

Jesus had finished a full day of telling parables, and told his followers it was time to leave. And then, he took a boat trip. It is typical in Mark's gospel that Jesus would teach for a while and then withdraw. He would perform some kind acts of mercy and then he would disappear. If someone discovers who he is, or learns what he is up to, Jesus muzzles them and refuses to let them speak. According to Mark, Jesus Christ is a mystery. He will not be captured by a title or a nickname. He simply acts, then disappears, leaving people to wonder, 'Who was that man?' However, Jesus is always there with people. At the very end of today's text, the disciples have come to the realisation of the meaning of Jesus' presence in existential terms. 'Who is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?' A storm can explode with rage, and remind us how powerless we are. 'Why are you afraid?' asks Jesus. 'Tell me, why are you so fearful?'

If I were one of the twelve, I would say, 'Look, Lord, isn't it obvious? We are surrounded by powers we cannot control. Jesus presses by asking, 'Have you no faith?'

According to my German friend, there is a German saying on the basis of this text, which translated into English says, 'Nevertheless, Christ remains in the boat.' Jesus Christ, though he looks like he is sleeping in the boat, is still there with us. Despite the fact that Jesus was sleeping, God remained in the midst of the disciple's hopes and fears.

A New Testament scholar, Edward Romaiyer, points out that this miracle story in Mark is written in the form of a 'poem'. If that is true, we can easily imagine that people of the early church memorised this part and sang it to themselves. If you remember the political situation when the gospel of Mark was written, people were suffering from religious persecution by the Emperor Nero. The church was subject to a big storm of persecution as Peter and Paul, who were the pillars of the church, were already gone. It must have brought a sense of sustaining power to the early Christians who memorised this part of Mark and sung it to themselves.

Karl Barth, who was one of the theoretical leaders of the resistance movement in Nazi Germany, preached on this text in Mark and he likened the boat to the German church situation at that time in the midst of a storm. He strongly recommended and encouraged people to stay put in the boat as Jesus was with them. People were empowered and reconfirmed God's presence with them as a result of his sermon.

To be more concrete, it might be easier to understand that this boat symbolises 'life'. When our life journey goes along smoothly without storms, we tend to overestimate the foundation of life and become arrogant. However, once we face a sudden storm, we can turn our eyes toward the presence of God in whom we have trusted and who sustains us. In other words, our faith can be clarified when we are in the midst of a 'sudden storm'. The story in Mark has powerful living reminders of Christ's presence with us.

Personal Reflections—Living Reminders of Peace

About a year ago I had a chance as part of my work to visit a church called 'The Castle Church' in Wittenberg, Germany. The church is well known because Martin Luther posted his ninety-five theses on its door in protest against the church's practice of indulgences. As I went around the church building to the backyard, I was surprised to find a carving of pigs placed on the top of the outer wall. 'Why are there images of pigs on such a famous church?' I asked my German friend.

The answer was that they were made in the early twelfth century as a symbol of contempt for the Jews. In those days, the churches in Germany called Jewish people 'pigs' and treated them as such. In 1983, the 500th anniversary of Luther's birth, the building was to be repaired, and the topic came up as to whether or not the carving of the 'pigs' should be destroyed. The decision of the church people was that it should remain just as it was so that people would not forget that the churches in their history had discriminated against the Jews. I was rather shocked to learn that such a decision could be made. This would never have been done

by the so-called Japanese way of dealing with the past, which is either 'putting a lid on a scandal' or 'letting bygones be bygones'. It is ironic and absurd that the discriminated and oppressed Jews, having experienced a terrible holocaust, now turn out to be oppressors toward the Palestinians. Not all Jews, of course, as there are quite a few who are against what the Israeli government is doing. Nevertheless, the carving of 'pigs' is a powerful living reminder of the painful past of the German people. The 'pigs' also suggest that to forget our sins may be an even greater sin than to commit them. Because what is forgotten cannot be healed and that which cannot be healed easily becomes the cause of greater evil. Forgotten Auschwitz creates Hiroshima. And forgotten Hiroshima will create another nuclear disaster. Our collective memory plays an important role in our sense of being here and now.

Recently I read an article of an interview with US senator Daniel Inoue, who happens to be a member of the church that I served in about fifteen years ago in Hawaii. He was a member of the famous 442nd Regimental Combat Team in the European theatre, which many Japanese Americans volunteered to serve in during World War II. Dan Inoue lost his right arm during the war. He said in his interview, 'Only twenty-three out of 100 senators opposed the Senate resolution that gave President Bush the authority to attack Iraq.'

Dan Inoue was one of them. He also said, 'When I became a senator fifty years ago, 50 per cent of the members experienced combats. These men knew first hand that war is death, destruction and bloodshed, but now only a handful of them remain.' The collective memory of war is fading out on the part of people who make decisions in the US.

As some of you might remember, there was a big controversy two years ago about the textbook issue in Japan. One of new history textbooks for junior high school, which cleared the official screening of the Education Ministry, described very little about our wrongdoings in the past. Just to give you a few examples, the historical fact of the 'comfort women' was completely deleted

from the textbooks and the 'Nanjing Massacre' was described as only the 'Nanjing Incident'. The new textbooks had little to make us remember about our wrongdoing in the past.

Many letters from Korea, China and other Asian countries were sent protesting this new textbook. Fortunately, the textbook was adopted by only a very few schools (0.03 per cent) as a result of our advocacy and the protests of many of citizens' movements and church people's efforts, along with pressure from many other Asian countries.

Memory and remembrance also plays a very important part in Christianity. In our Holy Communion, through the bread and wine, we are reminded of the death and resurrection of Jesus. We repeatedly hear his words, 'Do this, in remembrance of me.' The cross at church reminds us of the redemption of our sins. What would Japanese children imagine and remember from such distorted history textbooks? I am very anxious.

What would children in Israel and Palestine, Pakistan and India, Indonesia and the Philippines remember from today's ongoing conflicts?

What would children in Iraq remember from the unjustifiable war?

What would all of us remember when we reflect upon what we did for peace?

Jeremiah reminds us, 'My anguish, my anguish! I writhe in pain! On the walls of my heart! My heart is beating wildly; I cannot keep silent, for I hear the sound of the trumpet, the alarm of war.' (Jeremiah 4:19–22)

Let us pray for peace.

Let us speak for peace.

Let us act for peace.

As we are on the same ecumenical boat, *Oikoumene*, and are living reminders of Christ who brings us peace on this earth.
Amen.

(Rev. Toshimasa Yamamoto, General Secretary, NCC-Japan, presented this Bible study at the CCA Joint Program Area Committees Meeting on 25 June 2003.)

Gotong Royong

Brief reflections on the genesis of CCA

U Kyaw Than

The year was 1938. The place was the Madras Christian College campus at Tambaram, in southern India. The occasion was the World Missionary Conference, held under the auspices of the International Missionary Council (IMC). Asian Christians who attended that conference expressed their wish to have an opportunity to meet together as Asians within the context of Asia as distinguished from that of a world conference. They had discovered one another at Tambaram and many issues discussed there rang similar bells for them though they lived in several settings and belonged to different church denominations. Shouldn't there be an interdenominational conference called specifically for all Asian Christians to compare notes and consider together the many common challenges they faced regarding their life and witness? And they lived amidst national communities with strong religious and philosophical traditions such as Hinduism, Islam, Buddhism and Confucianism, all of which claimed sufficiency for the 'spiritual' and moral satisfaction of the millions of peoples in Asia and the world. Asian Christians felt that they could learn from one another and crystallise their priorities in mission more directly than in deliberations of a world conference.

But before their proposal could be followed up, the Second World War broke out. Alongside the IMC, there emerged the World Council of Churches (WCC). By December 1949, when the first post-war East Asia Christian Conference (EACC) was called,

this world body of the churches had already been in existence. The IMC and the WCC jointly called that Asian conference at Bangkok, Thailand. (I had the privilege to be there as the youth participant from Burma.) It was decided there that the two world Christian bodies jointly set up an East Asia secretariat to be led by a roving ecumenical ambassador who would facilitate ex-



change of information and perspectives, and arrange opportunities for Asian churches to consult directly together regarding issues of Christian life and witness in the region. The late Dr Rajah Manikam, the executive secretary of the National Christian Council of India, was appointed to serve in that ca-

capacity. Concerns such as Christian home and family life, the use of mass media in communications, theological education and leadership training for youth were shared and examined in special Asian Christian gatherings, facilitated by the services of that roving ecumenical ambassador.

The two world bodies called a special consultation again at Bangkok in 1956. Personally speaking, I was about to complete my term as associate secretary-general of the World's Student Christian Federation, with its base in Geneva, Switzerland. The headquarters of the WCC were also located in Geneva. Dr Visser 't Hooft, the general secretary of the WCC who continued to keep in touch with the WSCF staff members asked me to fly to Bangkok to be part of that meeting.

As the Bangkok consultation drew to a close I became the one to be asked to follow in the steps of Dr Manikam, with the assignment to prepare the EACC to be held in 1957 at Prapat, on the island of Sumatra in Indonesia. As the conference proceeded, a 'Plan of Action' was drawn up to set up a regional ecumenical organ for continuing cooperation among the churches, and national Christian councils in East Asia. Two years earlier, a conference of Asian and African nations within the United Nations had been held at the beautiful hill-top city of Bandung in Indonesia. There were some comments that the East Asia Christian Conference planned for Prapat was a Christian 'Bandung' conference. Reality proved that these comments were invalid. It is important in this connection to state at least three of the basic inspirations for the participants in Prapat

conference.

First, it was a conference of churches and national Christian councils in a new Asia. And, Asia was understood in a wider geographical context, including Australia and New Zealand! Participants from these two countries were themselves speaking with a new voice emphasising that their countries were part of the context of Asia. In terms of their new understanding, Asia was, for them, no more 'the Far East' but the 'Near North' and their national destinies were very much bound up with those of their 'Near North' neighbours. The regional ecumenical body in process of formation was not 'a colour or racial bloc'. Rather it was a fellowship of Christian communities placed together by their common Lord in that part of the world for a common witness.

Secondly, the preamble of the Prapat Plan, which in substance became part of the constitution of the EACC (when it was so inaugurated at Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, in May 1959, a week before Pentecost), stated that EACC was to be an organ of continuing cooperation among the churches and national Christian councils as mentioned earlier. The point was that it was to be understood in terms of a living, growing 'organism' and not as an 'organisation'. Members appointed to be its executive staff were not envisaged as those occupying satellites orbiting in space, having an independent identity, but as those operating out of the framework of churches within their own national settings. Relevant ecumenical initiatives, commonly endorsed by the members of the fellowship and carried according to the ways and means appropriate for the purpose and context of EACC, were more important than rigid organisational processes and structures for action.

Thirdly, and certainly most crucial of all, was the inspiration to carry out together the common Christian task in that part of the world. The EACC members had been placed by the Lord of church and history himself. And the same part of the world had traditional and strongly established religious and philosophical systems, distinct from the Christian faith. The Christian communities in the region were minorities in the settings

of large populations owing allegiance to such religious and philosophical systems.

Biblically and practically, Christian witness was an imperative common task the churches must seek to fulfil. Hence, the theme of the Prapat Conference that set the EACC in process of formation was 'The Common Christian Task in East Asia Today'.

Dr Sokarno, the founding president of independent Indonesia, flew from the national capital Jakarta to the airport city of Medan, near Prapat on Sumatra, to address the opening church rally, attended, according to national newspapers, by some 10,000 Christians.

Christian members of the Indonesian government, as well as several Christian leaders of the nation, were also in attendance alongside the bishops, ministers and executives of the churches of different countries within the region and of course the general secretaries of the IMC and WCC. Understandably, the bulk of those at the rally were lay members of local congregations. It was for me an honour, as a young layman, to serve as a key person to prepare and organise that historic conference. The theme of the conference, 'The Common Evangelistic Task of the Churches', coincidentally, rang a crucial bell when the popular address of President Sukarno during the opening church rally dwelt on the theme, 'Gotong Royong'! During those days Dr Sukarno was challenging the people of his newly independent nation to join together in Gotong Royong, the needed common task of nation building. It was his slogan of those days and he himself led a presidential common task cabinet. As an eloquent popular speaker, able to prompt support from audiences, he spoke about the traditional practice of Indonesian people to join in contributing time, labour and even needed resources, when a neighbour built a house. When he asked his audience, the gathered multitudes, if they were following the thrust of his address, the 10,000 people roared: 'Gotong Royong!'

As mentioned, the theme of our conference was providentially 'The Common Evangelistic Task of the Churches'. Witnessing together, witnessing in unity, and conversely, unity and witness was the key inspiration

for the formation of EACC. The separated traditions or denominations, imported from the West were not really meaningful or relevant for the churches in Asia. Separations between the so-called 'evangelicals' and the so-called 'ecumenicals' were also of no moment in the Asian context, where it was important that one was a Christian as distinct from being a Hindu, Buddhist or Muslim. The denominational identities were secondary, or even confusing for neighbours of other belief systems. To take one example, Geredja Kristen Indonesia was one of the founding member churches of EACC, alongside churches of other traditions. But back in the Netherlands, its 'mother' church, sometimes known as the 're-reformed church', could not cooperate or belong to a common fellowship with other reformed churches in the same country. The late Dr Kyung Chik Han, the distinguished pastor of Yong Nak Church in Seoul, Korea, could have been labelled as an 'evangelical', as distinct from being an 'ecumenical'. But he was a very significant member of the first working committee (i.e. the executive committee) of the EACC.

Another committed leader in the working committee of the EACC was the late Bishop Chandu Ray of Pakistan, who became the director of the Coordinating Office for Asian Evangelism, a body set up with 'conservative evangelical' priorities by Christian communities whose members in the West would rather stay separate from 'ecumenical' organisations. Biblically based inspirations, contextual initiatives and inclusive interpretation of the region of the world called 'Asia' were some of the top priorities in the formation of the EACC, which now is CCA. May the Lord of church and history, who had begun a good work in Asia continue to bless this regional organ for his glory, under the leadership and participation of the worthy members of the new generations as they forge ahead in increasingly faithful and effective obedience in these historic times.

U Kyaw Than is a former general secretary of the East Asia Christian Conference. He teaches at Mahidol University in Bangkok, Thailand.

WCC's New General Secretary

Rev. Samuel Kobia, a Kenyan national, has been elected the new general secretary of the World Council of Churches (WCC). He will take over from Konrad Raiser in January 2004.

Kobia, an ordained Methodist Church minister, is currently WCC special representative for Africa.

The election took place during a closed session of the WCC central committee on 28 August in which 134 voting members considered two candidates selected by the search committee, Kobia and Rev. Trond Bakkevig from Norway.

After the announcement of the election result, Kobia told a gathering of church leaders that the WCC 'will work tirelessly towards the healing of the world, and the restoration of the human dignity of all the people of God.

'The challenge the world is facing today is how to relate to one another as human beings and not merely as consumers and sellers, or as powerful and powerless. The historical injustice of preceding centuries have come back to haunt us in the twenty-first century. Unless and until these underlying historical injustices are resolved, it will be difficult for everyone to feel safe in this world. As a council of churches, we commit ourselves to advocate for non-violent ways of attaining justice, peace and reconciliation.'

The WCC is a fellowship of more than 320 churches, seventy-four of them in Asia.



CCA general secretary, Ahn Jae Woong, congratulates the new WCC general secretary on his appointment



Samuel Kobia

Kobia, born in 1947, has degrees and diplomas from institutions in Kenya and the USA. In 1993, he was awarded the degree of Doctor of Divinity by the Christian Theological Seminary in Indianapolis, USA.

He is married to Ruth and they have two daughters and two sons.

From 1978 to 1984 Kobia was the WCC executive secretary of Urban Rural Mission. In 1993, he took up the post of WCC executive director of the Justice, Peace and Creation program unit. Prior to this, he served as the general secretary of the National Council of Churches in Kenya.

He helped reorganise the Zimbabwe Christian Council after independence, chaired peace talks in Sudan in 1991, and in 1992 chaired Kenya's National Election Monitoring Unit.

Among the books he has written are *The Quest for Democracy in Africa* and *The Courage to Hope*.

Speaking after the election, Kobia said the problem humankind is facing is deeply spiritual and moral, which is 'a huge challenge to the WCC. We will work tirelessly towards the healing of the world, and the restoration of the human dignity of all the people.

—Philip Mathew

Leave Iraq

The World Council of Churches has condemned the invasion and occupation of Iraq by foreign forces as an act of aggression in violation of the United Nations Charter and international law.

The central committee of the WCC in a statement said that the war on Iraq was 'immoral and ill-advised'.

The central committee affirmed the unity, sovereignty and integrity of Iraq and welcomed the lifting of economic sanctions against Iraq after thirteen years.

While noting the inalienable and fundamental rights of freedom of the Iraqi people, the WCC also affirmed the right of the Iraqi people to choose a new government and their full sovereignty over the natural resources of their country, and economic and social reconstruction.

The WCC called on the UN to work with the people of Iraq to form a representative government free from external influence.

It also called on the UN security council to insist on the withdrawal of the occupying forces and to take over the transitional administration in Iraq.

The WCC condemned the killing of religious recent terrorist attack on the UN headquarters in Baghdad.

It called on the occupying forces to give compensation to the Iraqi people for the damages caused by the use of military force.

The WCC wanted the UN to investigate and gather any evidence of violations of human rights of the previous regime, war crimes and crimes against humanity, and to punish all such crimes.

It expressed concern about the long-term political, social, cultural and religious consequence of the war and the continued occupation, especially the negative impact on Christian-Muslim relations.

The ecumenical organisation urged the churches world-wide and the international community to demonstrate their commitment and support to the people of Iraq, 'whose plight has not been given proper recognition in the rehabilitation and reconstruction of their country'.

—Philip Mathew

Naga Women Theological Forum

A consultation of theologically trained Naga women, held in Dimapur, India, decided to form a Naga Women Theological Forum to promote, among other things, theology from a women's perspective and to empower women through various programs.

The 28–30 May consultation on 'Doing feminist theology from a Naga women's perspective' was attended by thirty-four participants, including six men theologians, representing different churches and organisations. The participants at the consultation disapproved of 'any demeaning human-made distinctions on the basis of any gender' and said that 'as Naga women we choose to remain close to our life-giving heritages'. They also affirmed that as human beings and as Christians everyone has the inherent right to power and authority, to uplift the people and to build an egalitarian community of the Naga church and society.

The consultation, organised by the Ao Theological Association and the women's department of the Nagaland Baptist Church



A paper presentation at the Naga Women Theological Forum

Council, resolved to rediscover the Naga women's stories and to publish the documents of oral stories of women who contributed significantly to the development of women's movements in Naga society and church.

The participants in a statement said that the Naga Women Theological Forum will

create a space for articulation of women's experiences in doing theology and to establish networking among various organisations to work for common causes. One of the tasks of the forum will be to search for 'a new language of speech that would empower us as women, to live as free and whole human beings'.

Forthcoming Events

Looking Ahead: The 12th CCA General Assembly

The 12th General Assembly of the Christian Conference of Asia will focus on the theme, 'Building Communities of Peace for All'. This notion of peace is not simply the absence of conflict or an end to violence, but more the restoration of justice in human relationships as well as in the total life of the community, including that with the whole of God's creation.

The Assembly will be held from 31 March to 6 April 2005 at Payap University in Chiang Mai, Thailand.

CCA General Secretary Ahn Jae Woong has asked member churches and councils to reserve these dates and to pray and plan for the big event. A number of committees have been set up to begin the preparation work for the Assembly.

Poster Contest

The CCA General Secretary Ahn Jae Woong recently issued a circular enjoining member churches and councils to encourage Asian artists to participate in a poster contest on the 12th General Assembly theme of CCA, "Building Communities of Peace for All". The theme is taken from Mark 9:50b.

Interested Asian artists are encouraged to contribute their creativity through posters on the theme which will help ensure a meaningful observance during the assembly. The poster will be displayed at the Assembly site and will be the cover design for the various General Assembly publications.

The deadline for submission of entries is 15 October 2003. The prize for the best poster is US\$300. Artists may submit their entries to the General Secretary, Christian Conference of Asia, 96, 2nd District, Pak Tin

Village, Mei Tin Road, Shatin, NT, Hong Kong SAR, China.

General Committee Meeting in Bangkok

The CCA General Committee will meet on 22–26 October at the Bangkok Christian Guest House in Bangkok, Thailand.

Prior to the General Committee meeting, there will be other small group meetings of the officers of CCA and the finance committee. During the General Committee meeting, the Executive Committee will have a separate brief session to deal with staff matters while the General Assembly Preparatory Committee will also meet to plan for the 12th General Assembly. Meanwhile, a GA preparatory subcommittee was to meet on 13 September in Hong Kong to deal with the theme and issues of the General Assembly.

David Gill Honoured

Rev. David Gill was honoured recently by his country for his contributions to the church and society when he was made a member of the Order of Australia for his more than thirty years of ecumenical work and for his efforts in church unity and community building in Australia and elsewhere.

David Gill is a former general secretary of the National Council of Churches in Australia (NCCA). From 1968 to 1979, he worked in the Church and Society department of the World Council of Churches and as executive secretary for the Nairobi assembly. Before leaving the WCC, he was the director of the sub-unit on Renewal and Congregational Life. He was also helped host the WCC assembly held in Canberra in 1991.

David received the award from David O'Leary, the Australian Consul-General in Hong Kong, at a function organised by the Christian Conference of Asia (CCA) on 13 September. David, a former general secretary of the Uniting Church of Australia, was also the recipient of an Australian Centenary Medal for his service to Australian society through the NCCA.

Speakers at the function were unanimous in expressing their feeling that it was an award 'richly deserved'. David O'Leary said that David, a 'modest and unassuming person', took great initiatives for 'building bridges' among Asian churches. The Consul-General recognised David's efforts to prepare the way for the Roman Catholic Church to join the NCCA during his leadership, from 1988 to 2001. He also lauded the efforts of the Australian ecumenical leader in promoting good relationships between the various religious communities in Australia, and for his understanding of Asian churches and society.

Dr Ahn Jae Woong, general secretary of CCA, told the gathering of church and ecumenical leaders from different parts of Asia that David Gill, who currently serves as pastor of the Kowloon Union Church in Hong Kong, 'has always been at the heart of the Asian ecumenical movement. He is an inspiring pastor, an eminent ecumenical leader and an untiring motivator, who en-



David Gill, right, receives his AM from David O'Leary, Australian Consul-General in Hong Kong

couraged people's participation in God's mission for our times.'

Prof. James Haire, president of the NCCA, noted that David's efforts are a good example of how to work in a multicultural and multireligious society such as Australia. He expressed his appreciation for his contributions in the WCC and his pioneering work with the WCC's Program to Combat Racism.

David Gill referred to Asia as 'my home'. He was glad to be an Australian, he said, because 'it is a country so full of hope, of promise, of possibility'. He felt encouraged by the award because it is a recognition of the ecumenical movement, and of its continuing significance for Australia today.

—Philip Mathew

New General Secretary for Amity Foundation

Qiu Zhonghui has been unanimously elected the new general secretary of Amity Foundation. He succeeds Dr Hans Wenzao, who will stay on as vice-president of the Amity Board.

Qiu Zhonghui has had more than ten years experience working in Amity as the director of the Rural Development Division and as one of the general secretaries.

People

Australia

Rev. Prof. **James Haire** is the new president of the National Council of Churches in Australia (NCCA). Prof. Haire is the executive director of the Canberra-based Australian Centre for Christianity and Culture and a professor of theology at Charles Sturt University. The NCCA, comprising fifteen major Australian churches, works to bring churches closer together and helps them find a common cause and a common voice. 'Australia is a pacesetter in ecumenism,' remarked Prof. Haire, who is a former president of the Uniting Church in Australia. 'In the Asia region, we're one of the very few countries where the Roman Catholic Church is a full member of our council of churches. We Australians are very bad at giving a pat on the back. But in this area we really are the cutting edge.' Rev. John Henderson, general secretary of the NCCA, said that the council looks forward to the energy and wisdom that Prof. Haire brings to his leadership in ecumenical leadership.

India

Rev. **Chandran Paul Martin** has been appointed the executive secretary of the Chennai-based United Evangelical Lutheran Church in India (UELCI). Chandran was installed to the new position at a worship service, which was also organised to dedicate the new headquarters of the UELCI, 'Martin Luther Bhavan'. Chandran, a pastor of the Tamil Evangelical Lutheran Church, has worked in the UELCI for fourteen years. Later he worked as the executive secretary of the Department of Communications of the National Council of Churches in India. Known for his theological acumen, creative communication skills and passionate commitment for the issues of life and people, Chandran, who succeeds Dr K. Rajaratnam, takes up the new position with rich international and ecumenical experience and an in-depth knowledge of society and church in India. Rev. **A.G. Augustine Jeyakumar**, a pastor in the Arcot Lutheran Church, was also appointed the executive secretary of the Lutheran World Federation National Com-

mittee of India at a meeting held after the installation service. The UELCI, which is a communion of eleven member churches, was formed in 1926. It has a membership of some million Christians throughout the country.

Korea

Elder **Chung Bong Tuck** of the Presbyterian Church of Korea retired as executive director of Korea Society for Service in Asia (KSSA) on 31 May. In a letter of felicitation, Dr Ahn Jae Woong, general secretary of CCA, commended Chung for having been the prime mover in the formation of KSSA, which over the last ten years has become an agency with the noble value of ecumenical sharing of resources with other Asian countries. He is succeeded by the Rev. Park Chang Bin, who brings with him rich ecumenical experiences.

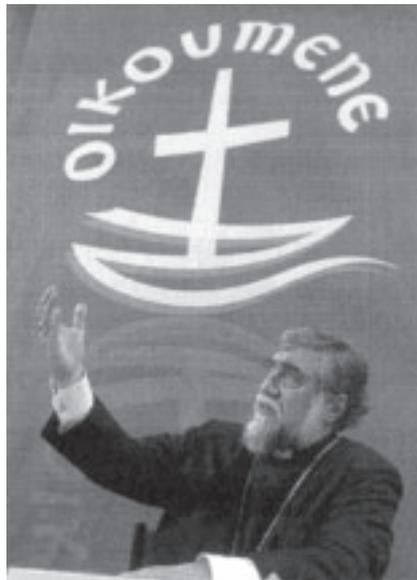
Rev, **Paik Do-Woong**, general secretary of the National Council of Churches in Korea, has been elected as president of the Korea Conference on Religion and Peace, comprising seven major religions in Korea. Recently he led a delegation on a chartered flight to Pyongyang, North Korea, during their independence day on 15 August.

Aotearoa New Zealand

Dr **John England**, an ecumenical leader from New Zealand, was awarded an honorary doctorate (Doctor of Humanities) by the Divinity School of Silliman University on 3 September. The award is in recognition of John's contribution and work in the area of ecumenism, and theological and laity education. Silliman University was originally a Presbyterian foundation set up in 1901. Today it is a large general university in Dumaguete in central Philippines, directly related to the strongly ecumenical United Church of Christ in the Philippines.

Thailand

Dr **Boonthong Poocharoen**, president of Payap University in Chiang Mai, Thailand, has been named as the chairman of the host committee of the 12th General Assembly of the CCA.



Work Together

The moderator of the World Council of Churches (WCC) has called its member churches to give interreligious dialogue 'a high priority' in their work.

Speaking on the first day of the WCC central committee held in Geneva on 26 August, Aram I, WCC moderator and the Catholicos of the See of the Armenian Apostolic Church in Lebanon, said that 'dialogue, relations and collaboration with other religions' are important for WCC's 'ecumenical witness'.

He told the 158-member central committee that 'dialogue is the only way for religions to become proactive, the only way for them to articulate their common voice concretely and to participate actively in the transformation of society. There is no alternative to a dialogue that challenges all religions to go beyond their institutional and dogmatic boundaries to seek a common ground for living, reflecting and working together,' he said.

The Catholicos argued that religions should work together to address situations in which religion is being exploited to fuel ethnic and political tensions. 'These situations distort the very image of religion and bring its credibility into question. Religions must help each other to defuse potential conflicts and dialogue could serve as an effective preventive measure by leading reli-

gions towards an active healing and reconciling ministry,' he said. He expressed the view that interreligious dialogue must not be used as a last resort to political negotiations or only in emergency situations

Stating that theological dialogue must have its own integrity, agenda and methodology, he urged the WCC to give quality and direction to its interreligious activities.

The church leader pointed out that dialogue is no longer merely a theological question, but 'essentially an existential challenge of living together. Life together is a gift of God. We all belong to the one household of God. Living as community is integral to all religions,' he observed.

According to the Catholicos, religious communities must build bridges of trust and live together peacefully and harmoniously and with the sense of mutual responsibility and accountability. —*Philip Mathew*

No Uniform Civil Code

The National Council of Churches in India has urged the government not to impose a common civil code on people before initiating 'a study process' on the subject among the different religious communities.

NCCI's response came in the wake of an observation made on 23 July by the supreme court chief justice V.N. Khare that the government should introduce a common civil code in the country. Justice Khare expressed the view that a common civil code will end discrimination between various religious communities in the areas of marriage, succession and property, and that such a code would help in removing the contradictions based on religious ideologies.

In a statement the NCCI noted that different religious communities in India have different personal laws and these laws are the basic marks of their identity. Rev. Ipe Joseph, general secretary of the NCCI, said that the government should take all the communities into confidence 'so that religious sentiments of people of any faith or no faith are not hurt. 'While this is a difficult task, it can be achieved through dialogue and by arriving at a consensus,' he added.

Catholic Nun Receives Peace Award

Benedictine Sister Mary John Mananzan, educator and human rights activist, has been given the East Asia Women's Peace Award for her work and leadership in promoting regional peace and global understanding.

Sister Mary John shared the award with, among others, Myanmar's freedom and democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi and former Philippines President Corazon Aquino.

The sister received the award, considered to be Asia's version of the Nobel Peace Prize, on 11 August at a convention in Manila organised by the Millennium Women for Peace and Development Foundation.

Sister Mary John is a former president of the women's organisation, Gabriela, a national alliance of women's organisations. She was also involved in running St Scholastic's College, set up to inculcate in students solidarity with the poor and oppressed.

The award recognised her contributions to feminist activism and for setting up women-centred programs.



CCA's 12th General Assembly

31 March – 6 April 2005

Payap University,
Chiang Mai, Thailand

'Building Communities
of Peace for All'

Andrew Hsiao

Dr Andrew Hsiao, a church leader and former president of the Lutheran Theological Seminary (LTS) in Hong Kong, passed away on 25 May. He was 77.

Dr Hsiao was the chairman of the Hong Kong Christian Association. He also served as chairman of the Association for Theological Education in South East Asia. He was a vice-president of the Lutheran World Federation from 1977 to 1984. He became the president-emeritus of the LTS in 1994.

When the LTS had to shift its campus, due to a Hong Kong government order in 1984, he took the initiative and leadership in setting up the seminary on a new campus, which was completed in 1992.

Born in Hunan province in China on 3 May 1926, Hsiao had his early education in Hunan and Hong Kong. Later, he studied at the Augsburg College, Colombia University, and the Union Theological Seminary in the United States of America. He took his PhD from the New York University in 1970 and returned to Hong Kong to become a professor at LTS. He was ordained into the ministry in 1971. Immediately after his graduation from LTS in 1952, he worked as editor and director of translation at the Lutheran Literature Society, which later became the Taosheng Publishing House.

Among several books, besides many articles, he wrote are *Introduction to Christian Religious Education*, *Introducing the Lutheran Churches*, *A Brief History of the Chinese Lutheran Church* and a handbook of Christian Religious Education. He was in the midst of completing a book on the history of the development of Chinese theological education when he died on the campus of LTS in Hong Kong.

A former chairman of the Hong Kong Theological Education Association, Dr Hsiao was the recipient of many awards, including an award for outstanding service from Pacific Lutheran University, the Christopher Tang Chinese Literature Prize and the Christus Lux Mundi award from the Luther Seminary in the USA.

Dr Hsiao is survived by his wife, two sons and a daughter.

La Verne D. Mercardo

Methodist bishop and ecumenical leader La Verne D. Mercardo passed away due to illness in Manila on 6 July. Bishop Mercardo was the general secretary of the National Council of the Churches in the Philippines (NCCP) from 1974 to 1987.

He is credited with building the NCCP into a powerful institution, which initiated and promoted the struggles for justice and democracy in the Philippines.

During this time many Roman Catholic leaders and thinkers in the Philippines came closer to the NCCP to work for the poor and oppressed.

Bishop Mercardo was a visionary whose courageous leadership gave inspiration to many around the world.

Victor W.C. Hsu, senior advisor to the New York-based Church World Service, called him 'a quiet visionary ... and giant of the ecumenical movement'.

Fridolin Ukur

The Rev. Dr Fridolin Ukur, ecumenical leader, theologian and poet, died in Jakarta on 27 June. He was 73.

Dr Ukur, who was a pastor of the Gereja Kalimantan Evangelis, earned his doctorate in 1971 from the Jakarta Theological Seminary.

He co-authored *The Growing Seeds*, which is a research work on the life of the churches in Indonesia. He also wrote more than 1,000 religious poems, which were published as *The Face of Love*.

Dr Ukur was the general secretary of the Communion of Churches in Indonesia during 1984–89. He also taught church history at the Jakarta Theological Seminary. Earlier, he worked as the general secretary of the Indonesian Student Christian Movement.

Dr Ukur was a man who dedicated the whole of his life for the Christians, churches and the ecumenical movement in Indonesia.

2003 Common Prayer for Peace and Reunification of the Korean Peninsula

Gracious God,
We who live in a time of suffering gather our hearts in prayer
to you our Lord who cares for this world with your loving hands.

We live in a land
that cries out with the tears falling from 70 million crosses.
Crosses of separation!
Pain, more painful than words, hangs upon these crosses, O Lord.

The Joint Statement of 15 June 2000
was a symbol of peace which you granted to us
so that we may cast off our burdensome cross of division
and seek lasting peace on the Korean Peninsula.
But even now, as we pass through this month of August in the year 2003
we strain under the cross of division.
Our failure to grasp your wisdom, our lack of your spirit-filled motivation
only adds to the weight of the burden we carry.

O God,
Forgive us our weakness.
You challenge us to face each other more often, to love each other more deeply,
to open our hearts to understand each other more clearly,
but we have failed in these things..

O God,
Grant to us new strength and power.
Give us the courage to
fulfil your will in our lives and our nation's history.
Lead us to close the chapter of fifty painful years under the Armistice.
Guide us to full commitment to end the war, and to move forward to peace.

Loving God,
We turn yearningly to you in our prayers.
May our faith in you blossom and bear the fruit of love for our 70 million sisters and brothers.

May the tears and pain of 70 million become the joy and song of 70 million.
Lead us so that through the autonomous actions of cooperation between North and South
our boundaries of peace and mutual existence may become wider.
Hear this, our prayer of our heart's deepest desire.
Grant to us the day when we shall sing for joy in peace, a unified people.
Give us this day, and may it come soon, O God.

We pray this in the name of the One who gives us peace, Jesus Christ.
Amen.

This prayer was written jointly by the National Council of Churches in Korea and the Korean Christian Federation
(Since 1991, the National Council of Churches in Korea (NCCCK) and the Korean Christian Federation (KCF)
have held a Common Prayer Week for Peace and Reunification of the Korean Peninsula.

It is their wish that ecumenical partners and churches pray for peace and reunification of the Korean
peninsula using this prayer. At present tension in the peninsula is increasing rapidly.)