



Christian Conference of Asia

# cca news



Rejoicing together

Volume 38 • Number 4 • December 2003

# *Rejoicing together*



The cover artwork is a detail from a painting entitled 'Khao Prasert' ('The Good News'). The oil and acrylic painting, on canvas, depicts the birth, crucifixion and resurrection of Christ. It was painted in Chiang Mai in 2001 by Salvador T. Martinez (see page 32).

*Rejoice with those  
who rejoice, weep with  
those who weep and  
live in harmony with  
one another*

Stories of indigenous and Dalit women's struggle for selfhood are always inspiring and they move one's heart. One such story is featured in this issue of *CCA News*. There are also stories of issue-related events, such as a human rights training, an HIV/AIDS consultation, a migrant workers consultation and a seminar on Asian peace and Urban Rural Mission. These are all part of CCA's practical efforts initiated as part of Christian responses to these issues.

Reports of the intellectual involvements of CCA, reflected in the School of Ecumenical Leadership Formation, the Asia Religious Educator's Forum, the People's Forum on Peace for Life and the ecumenical lectures at Silliman University in the Philippines, which you see in this issue, are again Christian responses focused on reflective issues and groups in CCA today.

The two reflections in this issue provide us with spiritual nourishment, and the two reviews of the WCC and CCA books give us enough food for thought.

CCA has been nurturing and promoting ecumenical virtues in a non-Christian milieu in Asia today. As responsible Christians, our way of life is confessing together, living together, witnessing together, journeying together, working together and rejoicing together, which are ecumenical virtues of our times.

As the CCA Christmas Message 2003 states, 'We all need courage to seek the way of transformation, our old thoughts and ideologies, habits and customs, beliefs and practices.' This transformation is possible when Jesus is born in our hearts and minds constantly over against evil behaviour in our day-to-day life. In a world ridden with violence, the new-born Jesus in our hearts and minds can transform our family lives, relationships, churches, workplaces and communities.

Mass killings and violence in Iraq, Turkey, Israel and Palestine in West Asia and conflicts in the Asian continent are common features these days. As new-born Jesus tells us, 'Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called Children of God.' (Matthew 5:9) We need to strive hard to build peace in this world so that we may be called truly children of God.

At this festive season of Christmas, let us 'rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep [and] live in harmony with one another'. (Romans 12:15-16).

May God bless us. We wish you a merry Christmas and a happy new year.

—*Abn Jae Woong*

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**cca**news

Volume 38 • Number 4 • December 2003

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Official publication of the Christian Conference of Asia

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# A call for a 'non-bellicose world'

## CCA general committee meets in Bangkok

**A**hn Jae Woong, the general secretary of CCA, has called for an 'ecumenical campaign for a non-bellicose world'. Presenting a report to the general committee, held in Bangkok, 22–26 October 2003, he said that the campaign was necessary in this age of war and terrorism, created by a culture of violence that is spreading in many parts of the world.

He said that the ecumenical campaign should be done with people of other faiths, no faith and civil society groups.

The 26-member general committee, comprising officers and representatives from 18 member countries in the region, meets once in 18 months between the general assemblies and in the year of the general assembly. The next assembly will be held in Chiang Mai, Thailand, from 31 March to 6 April 2005, on the theme, 'Build-



Ahn Jae Woong makes a point at the CCA general committee meeting

ing communities of peace for all'. Eleven general assemblies have been held so far.

The last assembly was held in Tomohon, Indonesia, in 2000.

While stating that 'ecumenical enthusiasm has gradually declined', Ahn Jae Woong said, 'ecumenical dreams, visions, theological thinking, agendas, involvement, leadership and resources' may not be attractive to the mainline churches. Decreasing church membership and funds in the those churches could affect the ecumenical movement in the future, he warned.

According to the general secretary, four foundations of the ecumenical movement need more focus. These are 'faith in God (requiring *metanoia*), love for each other and other people (requiring *koinonia*), hope in building communities (requiring *diakonia*) and care of God's creation (requiring *harmonia*)'.

He also listed the following tasks for the revitalisation of the ecumenical movement:

- Regenerate the spirituality of the ecumenical movement.



Robert Edgar addressing the general committee

- Redefine the vision and mission of the ecumenical movement.
- Reinvent the programs of the ecumenical movement.
- Reproduce leadership of the ecumenical movement.
- Reconstruct the structure of the ecumenical movement.
- Remobilise the resources of the ecumenical movement.
- Redevelop membership of the ecumenical movement.

Ahn Jae Woong announced that the first volume of *A History of Ecumenical Movement in Asia*, by Ninan Koshy, will be ready for publication in April 2004. The second volume edited by Ninan Koshy is also scheduled for release at the same time.

Earlier, on 23 October, the General Committee, which was attended by members, staff, resource persons, guests and invitees, began with an opening worship. Dr U Kyaw Than, former general secretary of the East Asia Christian Conference, delivered the sermon.

Dr Prawate Khid-arn, acting associate general secretary for finance, who presented the finance report on the first day, urged member churches to actively participate in the work of the CCA and to really own it by extending moral and financial support.

A highlight of the event was the three Bible studies, 'Community in Matthew',

'Community in Luke and in John' and 'Commission to mission in Mark', which were conducted by Dr D. Preman Niles, a Sri Lankan theologian and former general secretary of the Council for World Mission.

The General Committee also heard two special guests, Rev. Dr Robert Edgar, general secretary of the National Council of Churches of Christ in the USA, and Mr Victor Hsu, senior advisor to the director of the Church World Service (CWS).

Dr Robert Edgar, a former congressman, expressed the desire to jointly work and collaborate with the work of CCA in creating non-violent societies. He expressed the willingness of the NCCC-USA in joining with CCA in issuing joint statements on matters affecting the region and outside. He also called for more exchanges of delegations between CCA and NCCC-USA.

Mr Victor Hsu assured the meeting that CCA will be a major partner of CWS in the years to come. He paid tribute to CCA for being the Asian voice in the international ecumenical arena. He, too, wanted more exchanges of persons and information between CCA and the churches in the USA.

In a resolution adopted before the conclusion of the of the general committee, CCA expressed its concern and displeasure over the Korean government's decision, taken at the behest of the US State Department, to send additional troops to Iraq. It urged the Korean government to withdraw the deci-



Victor Hsu

sion and instead 'work towards building peace and reconciliation through participation in the reconstruction and rehabilitation of Iraq and its people'.

The resolution, which was sent to Korean president, Roh Moo Hyun, expressed solidarity with the Korean people and the National Council of Churches in Korea in their opposition to the government's decision and expressed full support to their efforts in building peace in Iraq.

Among the special invitees who attended the General Committee meeting were Prof. James Haire, a member of the preparatory committee of the forthcoming General Assembly, who is also the president of the National Council of Churches in Australia, and Rev. Sint Kimhachandra, general secretary of the Church of Christ in Thailand.

—Philip Mathew



Preman Niles leading a Bible study

# Human rights in Asia

Training program calls on churches to be on the side of the victims

**T**wenty-eight people from 15 countries gathered together in the Archdiocesan Pastoral Centre, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, on 10–16 November 2003 for the seventh annual human rights training organised by CCA's program area on Justice, International Affairs, Development and Service. Among the human rights topics they discussed were:

- the historical background to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and its implementation,
- the UN mechanism on human rights, and the human rights situation in Asia,
- the role of the ecumenical movement in promoting and protecting human rights,
- peace and conflict resolution and its tools.

Resource persons were Dr Gert Rilpert from Ecu-Learn, Germany, Mr Ali Saleem from AHRC, Hong Kong, Ms Mandy Tibbey from Australia and Dr Albert Walters from Seremban Theological Seminary, Malaysia.

At the end of the training the participants wrote a letter regarding their concerns and how churches should protect human rights in Asia.

## A letter to the Churches in Asia

We, the participants of the seventh annual human rights training sponsored by the Christian Conference of Asia, held 10–16 November 2003 at the Diocesan Pastoral Centre, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, nominated for this training by our respective churches in Asia, for which we are very grateful, come from such different areas as southeast Asia, south Asia, northeast Asia and the Mekong region, and have been together for fellowship, in-depth study, discernment and reflection for one week.

Central to our training was the situation of human rights violations in Asia and thus we were focusing on an issue and concern affecting greatly the lives of so many people in Asia, particularly the disempowered, the marginalised and the voiceless. We are now willing and ready to speak with one prophetic voice. Greatly disturbed and moved by the rising crescendo of the people's cry for peace, justice and human rights, we sincerely feel that we can do no less but to be on the side of those who are perennially vic-

timised by sinfulness of social structures that have institutionalised greed, exploitation, repression, apathy, indifference and division among people.

As concerned church people, we do now solemnly express our unity in proclaiming the following convictions:

- The human rights situation in Asia is continuing with impunity at an alarming rate.
- The respective governments of concerned countries in Asia supposed to be



Some of the participants at the human rights training in Kuala Lumpur

protecting and enhancing the promotion and respect of human rights, considering that they are signatories to the United Nations charter, are failing in doing such a solemn duty to their people.

- The churches' responses on the issue of human rights remains inadequate and generally weak.
- Organised people's responses and struggles for human rights are being challenged and discouraged by those who are benefiting from an unjust and immoral situation in many Asian societies where human rights are constantly being set aside.

The concrete bases of these declarations were found in the many accurately documented reports shared by the participants during the training.

Civil, economic and political rights, as well as the individual and collective rights of people in terms of religious beliefs and humanitarian practices, are often brushed aside by those who control and dominate others. It is quite shocking for us to note that even now there are societies in Asia that silently tolerate the burning of women by husbands, the segregation of people because of their class, colour, creed or religious convictions and discrimination because of gender. It was also underscored during our in-depth discussion that the churches' expressions of concern for the victims of human rights violations appear to be quite weak in terms of providing support and rehabilitation to the victims, particularly women and children. We reached a consensus that we can contribute something more concrete in this particular area of church concern.

People who are courageous enough to question and oppose policies and laws that are obviously unjust and immoral because they threaten life are often pressed, harassed, degraded, persecuted and sometimes eliminated physically by their own government apparatuses such as the military.

It was also very revealing for us to note that previous cases of human rights violations filed with the United Nations met strong opposition from governments, even if it meant betrayal of their own people's trust.

There is the continuous call of Christ to respect the dignity of women and men and there is his continuous act of healing those who have fallen victim to the demons of the powers that be.

It is from this biblical background that we call on our churches to follow their intention to work for upholding of the dignity of people.

We acknowledge their concern for this, which they have expressed by sending us to this training. We now ask them to go the 'second mile' by speaking out prophetically, identifying and prioritising human rights work in their countries and encouraging ministers and the laity to speak out by giving them adequate training in ministerial formation on this issue.

We suggest that training on human rights advocacy be incorporated into every realm of the educational work of the churches. In this context we want to stress the impor-

tance of the annual human rights training conducted by CCA and urge our churches to mandate CCA to continue this work.

In many of our countries there are groups in the nongovernmental sector struggling for improvement of the situation of human rights. We ask our churches to link with them and form networks of solidarity, so that the voice for justice and dignity in our countries be unified.

We ourselves, moved by the empowering and liberating spirit of God, affirm our active involvement for renewal and transformation through journeying together with the oppressed people of God in Asia. By constantly drawing strength from the wellsprings of our faith we are confident that overcoming the gigantic and seemingly insurmountable obstacles will not weaken our resolve but inspire us further to make a contribution for a just, peaceful and egalitarian world.

## CCA Christmas message 2003

To our sisters and brothers, partners on the ecumenical journey:

We greet you as Christmas approaches, in spite of living in an age of uncertainties created by war, terrorism, violence, conflicts and economic globalisation. As we welcome the child Jesus, our humble gentle saviour, may we too welcome all who are trusting, humble and gentle. We all need courage to seek the way of transformation, our old thoughts and ideologies, habits and customs, beliefs and practices. As we long for the peace that the world cannot give, may we struggle together for building communities of peace for all, along with people of other faiths and no faiths. May the God who created and yet more wonderfully restored the dignity of human nature be with us all, as we celebrate the birth of Jesus, this Christmas.

Jesus said, 'I have said this to you, so that in me you may have peace. In the world, you face persecution. But take courage, I have conquered the world!' (John 16:33, NRSV)

May God bless us all!

Rev. Jennifer Dawson, President (Aotearoa New Zealand)  
Dr Wong Wai Ching, President (Hong Kong)  
Most Rev. Dr Joseph Mar Irenaeus, President (India)  
Mr Anthony Row, President (Malaysia)  
Mr Israel Paulraj, Honorary Treasurer (Sri Lanka)  
Dr Ahn Jae Woong, General Secretary (Korea)

# Peace building

## Indigenous and Dalit women reclaim the right to wholeness

**T**wenty-nine women gathered in Chiang Mai on 8–14 September 2003 for a workshop on Asian indigenous/Dalit women overcoming violence on the theme ‘Indigenous/Dalit Women, Peace Building and Conflict Transformation’. The women came from indigenous communities in Asia and the Pacific—Aborigine, Bunun, Dalit, Ibanag, Igorot, Kachin, Karen, Lahu, Lawa, Naga, Orang Asli, Papuan, Rungus, Shan and Tayal. They were students, teachers, professors, social workers, pastors, presbyters, writers, researchers, lawyers and directors of church programs and institutions, who came not as individuals but as parts of communities that seek and pursue the establishment of peace and justice in the world. They came from India, Thailand, Myanmar, Malaysia, the Philippines, Indonesia, Japan, Australia and Taiwan.

The workshop was organised by CCA in partnership with the World Council of Churches (WCC). It was hosted by the Women’s Department of the Church of Christ in

Thailand (CCT) and sponsored by the Fellowship of the Least Coin (FLC), the World Day of Prayer—German Committee and the United Church of Christ in Canada. It was an example of the kind of ecumenical cooperation that is taking place today on the issue of violence against women and women’s participation in the Decade to Overcome Violence.

The participants prepared their own name tags, illustrating the meaning of their names. The self-introduction through the meaning of names affirmed their identity. It gave insights into connectedness with nature, historical events during birth, models whom parents want to have for children and what they hope their child will be. Their offering of traditionally woven cloth and other symbols during the opening worship brought to the gathering the depth of the individual and communal experiences, perspectives and aspirations and the degree to which each one is committed to promote peace, transform conflict and overcome vio-

lence in response to God’s grace and call to humanity.

Corazon Tabing-Reyes welcomed the participants, provided an overview of CCA’s initiatives in peace-building and conflict transformation, explained how the workshop connected with the Workshop on Women and Racism in Asia held in Hsinchu, Taiwan, in 2000, and outlined the objectives of the gathering. Using the cultural image of weaving, she encouraged participation, resourcefulness and creativity during the week’s flow of the program. Marilia Schuller shared the ecumenical vision of peace and justice in ‘the whole inhabited earth’. She spoke about the importance of sharing knowledge, experiences, struggles and hopes of diverse peoples and communities in building bridges of understanding and forging an ecumenical commitment to overcome violence.

Using visual aids participants shared respective country situations on peace issues and what their church, organisation



Tribal women from Thailand leading the morning prayer

and women are doing to address them. They wove women's stories both in the Bible, as led by Limala Lungkumar, and their personal stories of turning-point events, persons who influenced them and experiences that inspired them to be involved in peace issues. Limala concluded the first Bible study based on Judges 19 with these words: 'Empowering indigenous women to bring justice and transformation has to start with taking women's experience as the starting point, breaking the culture of silence in order to create a cultural action for liberation, creating space for women to raise their voices as an active subject and assert their rights and inclusive epistemology in the knowledge construction. Unless these aspects are taken seriously injustice to women will continue.'

The weaving of their stories revealed the commonalities in the struggles and pain, the hopes and aspirations of the communities represented, particularly of women who continue to suffer from various forms of violence on account of their being women and of being indigenous, tribal, aboriginal or Dalit. The participants shared in discussions about pervasive domestic violence, incest, rape, discrimination, the destruction of the environment, the desecration of ancestral land and the denial of fundamental rights, including access to basic needs, health care, sanitation facilities and opportunities to



Limala Langkumar from India leading in Bible study



Indigenous and Dalit women weaving stories together

participate in decision-making processes that affect every aspect of their life. Colonialism and globalisation exacerbate their difficult plight. All these deny them the dignity and pride to live as human beings created in the image of God.

But their undaunted faith and hope in God give rise to their commitment and actions. They were inspired by the Bible study on the theme 'Protest with a Cause' based on Mark 11:15–19, on the story of Jesus courageously turning the tables in the temple. Aida Cadiogan of Tebtebba challenged them to document stories of women's participation in peace-building and conflict transformation. As most indigenous communities have an oral tradition, there are few written stories except those of the Naga women in India.

The women shared their ways of building peace and conflict transformation drawn from their cultural traditions. These are community based and revolve around their connection with nature. The following is a brief summary of these ways:

- Use of rituals based on seasons and special events, honouring and celebrating life stages from pregnancy, birth, marriage and death.
- Use of symbols such as charcoal, smoke, branches, cloth and pipe.
- Sharing of community meals.
- Offering of gifts such as pigs and products harvested from the ground.

- Mediation—seeking a third person like an elder or having community leaders to act as mediators or have all the women go to a conflict situation.
- Symbolic agreement or blood compact.
- Articulation, such as through stories, poems, songs, prayers, dance and other cultural expressions.

The richness of the shared ways of peace-building will be presented in a resource book that the group agreed to publish in order to contribute to the discourses of the church and of the civil society.

Marilia Schuller led in a process of weaving the participants' ecumenical perspectives imaging the coming together of many streams of thoughts and ways, of churches having a common witness and service, of popular ecumenism at the grassroots where most of the participants are involved, of institutional ecumenism at the national, regional and global levels and interfaith relations and cooperation. The women expressed their commitment as indigenous/Dalit women in peace-building and conflict transformation through a statement entitled, 'Reclaiming the Right to Wholeness' (available on the CCA website, [www.cca.org.hk](http://www.cca.org.hk)).

The workshop ended with a creative and moving closing worship led by Joan Hendriks of Australia who worked well with the young women participants. She said, 'The young are our hope!'

—Corazon Tabing-Reyes

# HIV/AIDS consultation

## Pandemic a challenge to theological education

**F**ifty people, representing theological colleges, teachers, medical doctors, counsellors and church leaders came together at the United Theological College, Bangalore, in southern India, to find ways and means of incorporating the concerns of HIV/AIDS into the theological curriculum. The participants prayed together, shared their experiences together, discussed together, wept together and grappled together in search of meaningful ways of preventing and mitigating this deadly killer disease, for they knew that not only does it affect the human body, but also slowly and surely annihilates every dimension of human life—social, psychological, spiritual, ethical, theological and economic.

The participants came with their misunderstandings, prejudices, fears and guilt, but went back with a commitment to fight against HIV/AIDS in whatever way they can. They left with the conviction that HIV/AIDS

is not merely a challenge to medical science, but a challenge to theological education as a whole as well and therefore a challenge to the mission and ministry of the church.

This realisation led them to grapple with the question as to what they should do as theologians, ministers, teachers and leaders in theological education. They were convinced that HIV/AIDS concerns cannot be a mere appendix to theological education but have to be integrated into the curriculum as a whole. They agreed that each discipline of the theological curriculum, theology, ethics, biblical studies etc., should address the issues of HIV/AIDS from their respective perspective and deal with the issue in an interdisciplinary way.

A visit to the Freedom Foundation—a hospital/rehabilitation centre for people with HIV/AIDS—brought the participants to an awareness that a theoretical knowledge

about the pandemic alone will not help, but that it should be informed and influenced by praxis. This can happen if field education programs focus on it.

The devotions at the consultation led the participants to the awareness that faith articulations of theological communities such as liturgy, worship and preaching provide ample opportunity to promote HIV/AIDS awareness and sensitivity. Above all, the participants were made to reflect how HIV/AIDS is directly linked to unjust socioeconomic and cultural structures and therefore directly connected with capitalism, patriarchy, racism, casteism and gender discrimination—thus an issue for doing contextual theologies. The hope is that this awareness would motivate people to work for a more human and humane society where even persons with HIV/AIDS can live a life of dignity and meaning.

—A. Wati Longchar

## ‘Greatest sense of urgency’: WCC meeting warns churches

**P**articipants at a meeting on ‘Strengthening the Ecumenical Response to HIV/AIDS’ held in Bossey, Switzerland, urged the World Council of Churches (WCC), its member churches, related organisations and all institutions in the wider ecumenical family to work against HIV and AIDS ‘with the greatest sense of urgency’.

The meeting, held 10–11 November, noted that HIV/AIDS is ‘destroying families and communities across the globe, killing our children and their teachers, husbands and mothers, farmers and pastors’. The 23 participants, including some with HIV/AIDS, from different parts of the world and various organisations felt that ‘the prophetic voice of the church is absent and the action too modest with regard to HIV and AIDS’.

‘And the prophetic and ethical voice of the church, if not raised up strongly and clearly for the forces of life, will be complicit in deaths of millions this year alone,’ the participants added. They urged the WCC to lead the churches by:

- speaking openly about HIV and AIDS, its causes and prevention,
- committing itself and its member churches to be welcoming and caring communities that do not tolerate attitudes and actions that stigmatise or discriminate against people living with HIV and AIDS or their family members and being prepared to challenge any of its members who act otherwise,
- challenging gender inequalities, a major cause of vulnerability to the virus,

- supporting and lifting up the many gifts offered to the churches by their clergy who are living and working with those with HIV and AIDS,
- adopting a work policy to be presented at the next meeting of the WCC executive committee, regarding staff living with HIV and AIDS, including free access to treatment, which can serve as a model for member churches,
- engaging the full participation of people living with HIV and AIDS in the life and work of the churches,
- dedicating expanded resources to the ecumenical response to HIV and AIDS and giving this work the highest priority, including advocacy for the ministry to all who are affected.

# Youth self-help

## The training of future ecumenical leaders

The second School for Ecumenical Leadership Formation (SELF) was held at Sukamakmur, near Medan, the capital city of the western Indonesian island of North Sumatra.

SELF is a leadership development program, which aims to train and empower first-line national ecumenical youth leaders with international training, preparing them to take prominent leadership roles in the ecumenical movement, nationally and internationally.

The 21-day SELF program consisted of Bible studies, exposure programs, field trips, inputs by experts, theological reflections, understanding the theological and biblical underpinnings of the SELF component, and sharing personal and organisational experiences.

Among the topics that were discussed were feminism and gender sensitisation, globalisation and economic justice, the ecumenical movement, interfaith dialogue and peace building, networking and communicating the ecumenical vision and action plans for the future.



Participants heading for a church service

An important element of the school was the 'learn-as-you-do' pedagogy. This required the participants to lead the general program and conduct the day-to-day activities. For this, four groups of four partici-

pants each were formed balancing gender and subregion. There was leadership development by practising how to lead an international program along with the theoretical inputs on different topics provided by the resource people.

SELF was attended by 16 participants representing Australia, Aotearoa New Zealand, Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia, Pakistan, the Philippines, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Taiwan and Thailand.

The program was co-hosted by the youth department of the Communion of Churches in Indonesia (CCI) under the leadership of Ms Widowati Suwandi. SELF provided a strong bonding among the participants, the participants mutually supporting each other in their stay and learning.

It is hoped that the spirit of SELF 2003 will bear much fruit in the present and the future. Leadership development is a continuous and a long-term process. Hence, CCA Youth will engage in developing leaders for the ecumenical movement.



A time of rejoicing at SELF

# Ecumenism as a lens for our life and work

The Asia Religious Educators' Forum deepens understanding and commitment in a highly diverse and plural Asia

Thirty educators, representing national councils, member churches, theological seminaries, church-related schools and institutions and ecumenical organisations in Asia and the Pacific, came together on 29 September to 5 October 2003 in Taipei for the Asia Religious Educators' Forum (AREF), organised by the Ecumenical Formation, Gender Justice and Youth Empowerment program area of CCA. The event had gathered together participants from Aotearoa New Zealand, India, Indonesia, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, Myanmar, Pakistan, the Philippines, Sri Lanka and Taiwan. They were joined by Rev. Simon Oxley, coordinator of education and ecumenical formation of the World Council of Churches and Max Ediger of Documentation for Action Groups in Asia.

It was the aim of the forum to enhance and deepen among religious educators understanding of and commitment to ecumenism in a highly diverse and plural Asia. Hence the theme, 'Living in Oikoumene: Ecumenism as Lens for Our Life and Work'.

Simon Oxley emphasised the important role of religious educators in ecumenical formation within the challenges of living within a pluralistic world. His presence in AREF brought his commitment in supporting our efforts. He also affirmed the use of creative methodologies in ecumenical learning that are holistic.

Dr Dhyandchand Carr, formerly CCA executive secretary for Mission and Evangelism and Theological Concerns, expounded on the theological challenges and imperatives for living in the oikoumene. He spoke about the reality of cultures dividing peo-

ple, of economies pampering the rich and depriving millions, and of religions tending to encourage members to develop exclusivist attitudes and to erect barriers between them and followers of other faiths. He reminded participants that the Bible is an instrument through which God continues to speak.

Retelling the story of the Good Samaritan, he provided fresh insights into how organised religion often restricts concern for neighbour. He challenged participants to work towards transcending religious and cultural barriers, to find the hidden histories in their own lands and communities, to identify historical memories both within scripture and within current contexts that block relationships, and to enable people to be critical, to reflect, evaluate and discover a more complete story—a story of peace, justice and hope. The image of the wolf and the lamb remained a continuing discussion throughout the forum.

Dr Hope Antone, CCA executive secretary for Faith, Mission and Unity, led participants into a process of what she called 'scripture study'. She started with some assumptions: that since Asia is a multi-religious region, to be Asian means to be multireligious (as some Asian theologians claim), that people often display both exclusivist and inclusivist tendencies and that there is a need to reclaim the natural interreligious spirit among Asians, to develop a more pluralist attitude and perspective. Offering the images of land, water, waves, light and trees, she invited the participants to revisit biblical passages and teachings on these with an ecumenical, pluralist and inclusivist perspective.

As the participants were key religious educators, the forum offered an opportunity for them to learn from each other stories of ecumenical education engagement in their own context. They also had an opportunity to learn more about the context of ecumenical work in Taiwan through encounters with people of other faiths, leaders of churches, people with HIV/AIDS, migrant workers, advocates for justice and peace, ecology groups, educators, volunteer workers and evangelists. The encounters allowed participants to hear about the dreams and aspirations and the barriers and difficulties, as well as the sources of energies and hope that many workers and educators share in their efforts to build peace and foster unity among diverse groups of people in Taiwan. The sharing with Rev. Chiung-yuan Chiu (Chelsea), PCT program secretary for education, and Mr Hong-seng Cheng (James) of the Glory Foundation,



provided particular focus on the varying approaches and initiatives done among children and young people through the Life Education Program.

A significant implication for ecumenical learning was how content and process were linked together in this forum. While the content provided the context within which educators locate themselves, the process affirmed the possibility of wholeness. Beginning with an empty space, which participants themselves filled up through the offering of symbols and collective work, the forum maintained a natural flow with several elements that participants found very affirming—naming oneself and tracing the roots and meaning of names, sharing experiences and new insights in small groups and in plenary, eating together, doing Shibashi each morning, praying, scripture reading, dancing, singing, affirming one another with all kinds of applause and embracing.

Together, they wove the threads of a common story, a story scarred by deep cultural and historical wounds. Together, they made a commitment to accompany each other in a common journey—a journey that would lead divided nations and peoples into peace, justice and abundant life. As an expression of this commitment, the participants individually gave offerings—poems, prayers, litanies, drama, artwork, songs, guides for celebration and liturgy and frameworks for ecumenical learning in specific contexts. Together, they resolved to help promote and establish an inclusive community through such approaches as re-reading the Bible with new eyes; promoting inclusive language, symbols and images of God, caring for God’s creation and advocating for justice, peace and life and celebrating signs of hope, healing and reconciliation—all integrated in their religious education work.

The participants hoped that the next AREF would focus on the development of methodologies and curriculums that promote a truly ecumenical education in Asia and the Pacific. There is a commitment to maintain links among religious educators through subregional and national forums and through an e-group. The participants thanked CCA, the continuing committee that helped with the program—Edna Orteza, Jenny Harrison, and K.U. Abraham—and the sending organisations for what they said was a most meaningful ecumenical experience.

The event was made possible only through the generous hosting of the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan (PCT) and the kind support of World Council of Churches, Evangelische Missionwerk in Duetschland (EMW) and the General Board of Global Ministries (GBGM). As the forum ended on 4 October, the participants were mindful of Paul’s letter to Timothy (1 Timothy 6:17–19) and were challenged to use Paul’s admonition to guide their continuing journey as religious educators in Asia: ‘As for those who in the present are rich, command them not to be haughty, or to set their hopes on the uncertainty of riches, but rather, on God who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment. They are to do good, to be rich in good works, ready to share, thus storing up for themselves the treasure of a good foundation for the future, so that they may take up the life that really is life.’

—Corazon Tabing-Reyes



Dhyanchand Carr making a presentation



Worship through drama



Group discussion during an exposure trip

# Call for religious education

Silliman University hosts inaugural ecumenical lecture

The Christian Conference of Asia and Silliman University Divinity School (SUDS) held an inaugural ecumenical lecture on 9 September at Silliman University in Dumaguete City in the Philippines. This made Silliman University the fifth venue for the CCA Ecumenical Lecture Series, a brainchild of CCA General Secretary Ahn Jae Woong.

Hope S. Antone, joint executive secretary for CCA's Faith, Mission and Unity program area, gave the inaugural lecture on the theme, 'Religious Education in a Plural Context: Implications for a Christian University'.

Speaking before faculty and students of SUDS, the faculty of religion and other departments of Silliman University and pastors from Dumaguete City, Hope invited the participants to reconsider what they have been doing in light of the plural contexts of their school classrooms, Philippine society and the Asian region.

She called for a broadening of the scope of education in religion—from the often too narrow and particular Christian education to a broader religious education. This means educating persons towards an inward attitude of textured particularism and an outward attitude of religious pluralism.

Borrowing the phrase from American Catholic educator Mary Boys, Hope explained that 'textured particularism' implies grounding in one's religious tradition with the capacity to look at it critically. It is a grounding in religious self-understanding without fostering oppositional identity, which tends to be adversarial, intolerant and

demonising of the religiously other.

Using Diana Eck's elucidation of pluralism as being committed to one's faith community and at the same time open to learning from and with other faith communities, Hope described some ways of educating for religious pluralism. These include learning to recognise and appreciate differences, learning from differences without absorbing or being absorbed by the other, cultivating patience and humility, especially the humility to admit mistakes and to accept the finiteness of our knowledge and comprehension about life and the source of life.

Being an alumna and former faculty member of Silliman University, Hope knew that while three religion courses are required of all university students in the general curriculum, these are really focused on the Old Testament, New Testament and Christian ethics.

Hope's proposal to broaden Christian education into religious education implies curricular change and update as well as re-training of religion faculty. She said this is imperative for Silliman University for at least two reasons.

'First, students at Silliman University do not come from only one community of faith but from various communities of faith,' she said. 'We impoverish ourselves of the richness of our classes if we do not recognise and make use of the plurality that our students bring with them

'As many of the students are already grounded in the first language of their par-

ticular faith, 'our task ... is to help facilitate the learning of the second language—that of dialogue, conversation and meaningful encounter.'

Second, recent events in history have made us aware of 'how religious differences and our ignorance can be used to fuel animosity, hatred and violence'. Religious education, which includes learning more about each other's faith, culture and practices, may 'help to foster understanding and respect of differences and a deeper analysis of the roots of our animosity'. 'Our hope for survival in this fragile planet, earth, is in our learning to become neighbours and friends, no longer as strangers and enemies,' she stressed.

While in Dumaguete City, Hope also participated in the 42nd Annual Church Workers Convocation of Silliman University Divinity School on 2–4 September. Under the theme, 'Strengthening the Community of God's People amidst Alienation and Fragmentation', the convocation gathered around 200 church workers of the United Church of Christ in the Philippines (UCCP) from various parts of the country.

Bishop Ben Barlos of UCCP-Mindanao Jurisdiction gave the keynote address, entitled 'Afflicted, but Not Forsaken', Dr Everett L. Mendoza, vice president of Silliman University, gave the thematic exposition and Dr Gordon Zerbe, visiting Bible scholar and professor from Canada, gave two Bible studies. Hope preached at the closing service and agape meal on 4 September on the topic, 'More Room in God's Banquet'.



# Towards a people's forum on peace for life

A global coalition of ecumenical and interfaith movements opposes state terrorism and US global domination

Recognising that Asia is becoming the main theatre of the 'war on terrorism', and that people of faith need to oppose globalisation and the US-led offensive against justice, peace and life, 25 participants at an international workshop launched the 'People's Forum on Peace for Life: No Peace without Justice' in Seoul, Korea, on 12 October 2003.

The forum was conceived as a 'global coalition of ecumenical, multireligious and interfaith movements in solidarity, resistance and opposition to expanding state terrorism and US global domination'.

Referring to the USA as today's empire, the group stated in a closing declaration, 'We cry out against the destruction of life

that kills and wipes out communities, resulting from the greed and arrogance of an empire. Mounting injustice has driven us to reclaim in solidarity with peoples of the world the gift of life given us by God: "I have set before you life and death ... Now choose life, so that you and your children may live." (Deuteronomy 30:19)'

Participants noted how the empire has redefined war through 'creative strategies', which include a 'doctrine of preemption', a 'right to first use' nuclear weapons, and its aggressive claim to be 'globocop' through deployment of its forces and equipment around the world. Yet all these are a mere coverup of the real economic underpinnings of the war on terrorism, a strategy

to promote US economic interests militarily, the group said.

Participants also criticised the empire casting in religious language its so-called victories in Afghanistan and Iraq, e.g. theology of conquest, will of God etc. As this implicates the Bible and Christianity, faithful Christians are called on to respond loudly, 'Not in God's name.'

The international workshop was a follow-up to the 2002 International Ecumenical Conference on Terrorism in a Globalised World, which was held in Manila in September 2002.

The group of 25 people from 12 countries shared updates on contemporary US foreign policy and the state of global politics, current Asian geopolitics in the context of the war on terrorism and the theoretical foundation of the global forum on peace for life. They came from ecumenical and social movements in Asia, Africa, Latin America, the Caribbean, Europe, Canada and the United States.

Eunice Santana and Victor Hsu led the panel discussions on contemporary US foreign policy and global politics, Ninan Koshy gave a presentation on current Asian geopolitics in the context of the war on terrorism and Kim Yong Bock gave a presentation on the global forum on peace for life.

Organising the workshop were the World Council of Churches, the Christian Conference of Asia, the National Council of Churches in the Philippines and the National Council of Churches of Korea. A convening group composed of representatives of the four organisations are planning a big gathering of the forum in 2004.

—Hope Antone



Participants at the opening ceremony of the Saebuyk World Peace Centre

# Serving together beyond boundaries

## Preparations under way for Asia Sunday 2004

Next year's Asia Sunday, set for 23 May 2004, will focus on the theme 'Serving Together beyond Boundaries'. The theme is partly based on lectionary texts for that Sunday, which include Jesus' prayer for unity (John 17:20–26).

The theme, chosen by the Asia Sunday Planning Committee, which comprised a group of CCA staff, affirms the urgent need to live beyond boundaries, to be open to others in the world. While there will be some differences that cannot be resolved, the basis for unity can be found in a common witness and service, which hopefully

will bring together our evangelical task and ecumenical vision in obedience to the one God.

In a recent letter, CCA general secretary Ahn Jae Woong asked member churches and Christian councils to note the date to celebrate Asia Sunday, or to set aside another Sunday or even another day of the week for the same purpose.

For instance, in places where Sunday is not a holiday, the observance could be adjusted accordingly.

This was the case in Bangladesh this year, so they observed an Asia Prayer Day

on 6 June 2003 (a Friday) instead of Sunday, 8 June (see below).

Part of the Asia Sunday celebration is a special offering to help a particular recipient. It has been decided that the Asia Sunday 2004 offering will be for the Lao Evangelical Church in Laos.

The planning committee is now putting together the Asia Sunday 2004 liturgical booklet, which will continue the tradition begun in 2003, providing different liturgical resources, such as ideas for the sermon and Bible study, songs/hymns, prayers and litanies.

## Asia Friday 2003 in Bangladesh

Instead of Asia Sunday, an Asia Prayer Day was observed in Bangladesh on a Friday, 6 June 2003, by eight denominations, who came together at the main Assembly of God Church in Dhaka City.

Bishop Theotonius Gomes of the Bangladesh Catholic Bishops' Conference gave a sermon on the Good Samaritan, in line with the theme 'For We Are Neighbours'.

Following the sermon, the people were divided into small groups to pray for different countries of Asia.

Young people led worship through music and appropriate songs. Other churches in old Dhaka, including Catholic, Baptist, Church of Bangladesh and some other groups gathered on the evening for the Prayer Day.

The Asia Prayer Day was organised by the Bangladesh Christian Unity Endeavour (BCUE). Five thousand handbills were distributed throughout the country calling Christian individuals and churches, regardless of denomination, to observe 6 June as the day of prayer for Asia.



# ‘Be the change you are working for’

## Asian peace and URM in the twenty-first century

**B**e the change that you are working for. This was the challenge made by Sharon Rose Joy Ruiz-Duremdes in her keynote address at the international seminar on Asian Peace and the Urban Rural Mission (URM) on 6 October 2003 in Seoul, Korea.

The first woman general secretary of the National Council of Churches in the Philippines highlighted URM’s self-definition as a movement, not an institution. She lifted up the tabernacle as the imagery of what URM is all about—walking, weeping, fighting and celebrating with the marginalised people of Asia.

‘For as long as the masses in each of our societies continue to live out their reality through the images of poverty, exploitation and repression, URM will have a reason for being,’ she stated.

With the theme ‘Asian Peace and the URM in the Twenty-first Century’, the international seminar gathered 50 participants, including senior URM leaders, peace activists and theologians from Korea and other Asian countries, including Australia and New Zealand.

The seminar included sharing of sub-regional field reports (on rural issues in southeast Asia, urban poor issues in south Asia, labour issues in northeast Asia), thematic presentations, Bible studies, worship and exposure visits.

Dr Kim Yong Bock, chancellor of the Advanced Institute for the Study of Life in Korea, spoke on ‘Peace in Asia and the Role of the Church’. He called on Asian churches not only to be in solidarity with suffering and victimised people, but also to discern and share their historical visions of peace. Rev. Hwang Nam Duk, on the staff of the



Sharon Rose Joy Ruiz-Duremdes

International Solidarity Department of Yongdungpo–UIM, speaking on ‘Tasks and Future Prospects of Asia URM’, shared the case of the Asian URM Diakonia Training Centre, a regional collaboration of CCA-URM and YDP-UIM, as a model of a URM training centre to equip new URM leaders and activists, including youth and women.

Dr Kim Young Onn facilitated two interactive community Bible studies on sharing scriptures and love, and *koinonia* partnership in peacemaking.

The participants visited local churches, migrant centres, and the demilitarised zone between North and South Korea. They also participated in the 45th anniversary service of Yongdungpo Urban Industrial Mission on 5 October and the opening of the Saebuyuk World Peace Centre on 6 October at Saebuyuk Presbyterian Church. On 7 October a stone sculpture of the Hand of Peace was unveiled at the Saebuyuk World Peace Centre, led by Saebuyuk senior pastor Lee

Seung-yong. In a statement at the close of the seminar, the participants called on the CCA and WCC to:

- renew their commitment to stand with the oppressed and marginalised in Asia as they strive to participate in the reign of God on earth,
- strengthen their relationship with the Asian URM Diakonia Training Centre in Korea and the Asian URM movement to enable them to fulfill their historic role.

Participants called on churches, councils of churches and Christian organisations to:

- respect the integrity of URM by providing space and resources for it to function in relevant ways,
- intentionally develop a new generation of ecumenical leaders and URM activists.

Participants also called on the URM Asian network to:

- continue to dream dreams and to see visions and to bring these dreams and visions into fruition,
- broaden the networks and links of solidarity with people’s organisations and movements that are working for justice and peace,
- work actively to foster new URM leadership among women, men and youth in order to ensure the continuity of the URM ministry and their participation in building open and inclusive communities of faith.

Cohosting the seminar were the Saebuyuk World Peace Centre and the Asian URM Diakonia Training Centre in Korea. CCA and NCCCK cosponsored the event.

—Hope S. Antone

(Sharon has just been re-elected as NCCP general secretary for a further four years.)

# Empowering migrant workers

Consultation affirms fullness of life in the context of migrant workers' struggles

The situation of Asian migrant workers was the focus of a consultation that urged the churches to 'respond transformatively' to their struggle for a better life.

The consultation, organised in Kaohsiung, Taiwan, by CCA's Faith, Mission and Unity program area, on 11–14 November, gathered 40 participants on the theme, 'Affirming Fullness of Life in the Context of Migrant Worker's Struggles'.

The objectives of the consultation were to share stories of pain and struggle of migrant workers and current trends in migration in northeast Asia, to share and assess current experiences in advocacy and networking, to strengthen the role of churches in providing hospitality and empowerment for migrant workers and to establish a broader network among NGOs and churches dealing with migrant workers' issues.

The participants expressed their concern that migrant workers were treated as 'disposable' people.

'Incessant attacks against the rights of migrant workers, such as wage cuts, non-payment or underpayment of salaries, crackdowns on undocumented workers and their eventual deportation, physical, mental and sexual abuse, lack of social protection, curtailment of religious freedom, unjust migrant policies and other unfair labour practices have been common occurrences,' the participants said.

In a statement, the participants noted that migrant workers have been victimised and exploited by debt-ridden governments and agencies in Asia.

They have been 'victimised along with the expansion of capitalist globalisation, continuing political instability and socio-economic crises,' the participants felt.

The consultation urged the churches to include migrant workers in their mission

activities by being actively involved in building shelters as sanctuary, providing a holistic safety net, including medical care, education and empowerment through organising, establishing self-help programs, giving counselling and visits and developing spiritual strength among migrants, irrespective of their faiths.

The participants committed themselves to 'establish a transformative advocacy and networking program that will support the migrant workers' movement of resistance.

They also decided to launch appropriate actions, urging the Koreans, the Taiwanese and the Japanese governments to take more humane and just measures for migrant workers in order to prevent their having to face situations such as crackdowns and massive deportation.'

The participants were alarmed by news from Korea that two migrant workers committed suicide on 11 and 12 November, allegedly in fear of a mass deportation scheduled to start from 16 November by the Korean government. In an open letter, they urged the Korean government to take more humane and just measures for migrant workers in order to provide comfort and

protection to the migrant workers. They also expressed their respect and support to the Korean churches 'who have been with migrant workers in their ministry of upholding God's will for peace with justice'.

The statement noted that 'God is compassionate for migrant workers who have been suffering from the exploitation and the humiliation in their migratory countries in the time of capitalist globalisation. At the same time the God of history will guide and accompany the people in their migratory situation so they can overcome the limitations and gain strength and courage to create and develop a new space of cohabitation as a life in fullness.'

CCA has been involved in empowering migrant workers in Asia through workshops, consultations and grassroots community organisation training since 1980. CCA has also helped found the Asian Migrant Centre in Hong Kong. In July 2001, CCA, along with Korean churches and NGOs, organised the northeast Asia forum on globalisation and the rights of organisation of migrant workers in Seoul, Korea. The present consultation was a follow-up of the Seoul forum.



Participants from migrant sending countries in a mock demonstration

# Concern, friendship and fellowship for Asia

## EED delegation visits CCA

A delegation from Evangelischer Entwicklungsdienst (EED—Church Development Service) from Germany visited the CCA Centre on 15 October. The eight-member delegation was received at the centre by Dr Ahn Jae Woong, CCA general secretary, and the executive staff. A dinner reception hosted in honour of the delegation was attended by church and civil leaders in Hong Kong.

Dr Konrad von Bonin, chairperson of the EED's board of directors, who led the delegation, along with Ms Margit Fleckenstein, paid rich tributes to CCA for its work in Asia. He especially commended CCA's initiatives in promoting interfaith cooperation in the region.

Dr Ahn Jae Woong said that people in Asia were always encouraged by EED's 'concern, friendship and fellowship for the Asian people for the betterment of their life'.

Ms Margit Fleckenstein, president of the Synod of the Church of Baden and a member of the Council of the Evangelical Church in Germany, also spoke on the occasion.

The other members of the delegation were Dr Monika Gansbauer, Dr Katrin Fiedler, Mr Christian Sauer, Ms Anna Graf



Margit Fleckenstein (fourth from left) speaks at the reception for EED

von Bernstorff, Mr Heiner Knauss and Mr Christoph Wilkens. Ms Anja Maria Bugs, cultural and press attache of the German Consulate in Hong Kong was also present.

Hong Kong leaders who were present included Metropolitan Nikitas (Orthodox Church), Rev. Eric So (Hong Kong Christian Council), Major Alfred Tsang (Salvation Army), Mr Yip Kok Choong (Asia Pacific Alliance of YMCAs), Mr Basil Fernando (Asian Human Rights Commission) and Dr

Rose Wu (Hong Kong Christian Institute). The Bonn-based EED, an association of the Protestant churches in Germany, has been supporting the development work of churches, Christian organisations and private agencies in different parts of the world through, among other things, funding and offering consultancy services. One of the main aims of the EED is the creation of a just society.

—Philip Mathew



Konrad von Bonin



Konrad (left) and Metropolitan Nikitas (right) with Ahn Jae Woong



# Challenges ahead

## The future of ecumenism in Aotearoa New Zealand

The Conference of Churches in Aotearoa New Zealand (CCANZ) Forum 2003 in Christchurch in September was both a time of celebration and a time for reflection on the future of ecumenism in Aotearoa New Zealand.

The main work of the forum revolved around the future directions of the ecumenical movement in Aotearoa New Zealand, participants highlighting the need for some type of ecumenical expression in the country. While acknowledging CCANZ's achievements in bringing New Zealand churches together in conference each year, facilitating dialogues with those outside the mainstream churches, engaging with race, peace and gender issues and respecting diversity, the feeling remained strong that CCANZ was no longer the appropriate body for the ecumenical movement.

Increasing denominationalism, declining financial contributions, difficulty communicating at the congregational level and the lack of space for individual participation were all cited as problems with the current structure.

Hence the forum decided to call for a new expression within the ecumenical movement in Aotearoa New Zealand, something different from CCANZ. However it was pointed out that CCANZ could not simply be shut down. This would be unjust to partners, programs, agencies and staff. The executive therefore was given the task of:

- continuing the dialogue with Te Runanga Whakawhanaunga I Nga Haahi o Aotearoa,
- setting up with others a process/facilitating group to work through other options for a new organisation,



Retiring president Bishop Murray Mills

- establishing an open process dialogue for one year so that by Forum 2004 it will be known what the shape of the future ecumenical body will be.

The next annual forum of CCANZ will be held over the weekend 17–19 September 2004 in Auckland. —*Michael Earle*

## Overcoming violence

The opening worship of the CCANZ forum, led by conference chaplain and CCA president Jenny Dawson, drew on all the traditions of the denominations represented in CCANZ with a strong theme of peace and overcoming violence.

Dr Margaret Bedgood (former chief human rights commissioner), spoke on 'Acting to Overcome Violence: the Christian Imperative'. While violence might mean taking up arms, nuclear weapons and war, we need to look at 'violence closer to home, affecting us as day-to-day Christians' said Dr Bedgood. She spoke of the physical violence against children, the political violence against refugee and asylum seekers and the institutional violence of excluding gays and lesbians within the church. 'The seeds of violence

in all of us are also in our social structures and institutions (not least our churches) and in our ethos and our laws.'

For Dr Bedgood, the key to overcoming violence is 'acting'. It is about finding a third way to respond to violence, a more imaginative way than the two ways people normally react to violence: by flight/passivity or by fighting/violent opposition. 'Finding creative ways of confronting such violence is not something we do naturally but something we need to practice.'

### DOV

The Decade to Overcome Violence (DOV) was highlighted at the forum.

Robyn Cave introduced resources being produced in Aotearoa New Zealand about peace and overcoming violence. St Oswald's, in Wellington, was part of the pilot programme for DOV and it has now started to engage with the local Hindu community and temple. The DOV board

game, 'The Incredible Journey —Te Hikoi Whakamiharo', has been a success and the developing relationship with Parihaka is an ongoing commitment to overcoming violence and healing Aotearoa New Zealand's colonial history. The new Kereru Club is engaging children in DOV.

### New agency

The new Churches Agency on International Issues (CAII) was introduced. Currently made up of the Anglican, Methodist and Presbyterian churches and the Salvation Army, CAII aims to resource churches and congregations on international issues.

The first year of the pilot program focused on Israel and Palestine with a background on understanding conflict in the Holy Land being produced by Christian World Service, to whom the CAII research and analysis is contracted.

# People of faith in a violent world

Being grounded in the reality of the global context is a crucial part of ecumenical formation. A reflection on Psalm 85 by Jenny Dawson

There is a story told by an American nun, Joan Chittester, about her response when the police called to tell her that some of her sisters had been arrested for 'disturbing the peace' outside the Capitol building in Washington DC. As she questioned, it emerged that they had been praying the Lord's Prayer. Joan tells how she gasped at this. 'Do you mean to tell me that praying the Lord's Prayer in the rotunda of the US Capitol is a felony, but making nuclear bombs is not?' The police officer explained that he was just following orders. Joan reminded him about Nuremberg, then took his name and address to put him on the community's Christmas card list.

Psalm 85 reminds us that in a context of injustice we always have a choice in how we respond at times like this. We can kick and scream, or we can go gently, treading softly and aware of our shared humanity. A soul steeped in gentleness listens and learns where at first there seems no choice, no lesson or even no time.

We have to learn this lesson again and again. The process involves a deepening faith and developing a spirituality of trust, essential for actions of nonviolent resistance. But also absolutely essential for healthy survival is what theologian Mary Hunt calls 'contextual violence and episodic justice'. Occasionally we are shocked by news stories that remind us how much violence is going on around us. In fact it takes some effort not to be overwhelmed by such news, by what humans are doing to this planet, about how we live together globally. A kind of communal self-deceit and lack of honesty creates a numbness that stops us protecting those who need protection.

Often with personal violence there is a sense that this is unusual, that a person is experiencing something isolated. Yet statistics can jolt us out of this individualising, and the security industry is a telling indicator of how violence controls our society.

The church has played its part in this over centuries, not only in encouraging people to suffer in silence but by offering a dualistic theology that says 'deny the flesh and the feelings—and even the facts'.

Mary Hunt's 'contextual violence and episodic justice' enables us to recognise the hard destructive reality around us without being overwhelmed by it. Rather she invites us to notice and act with the windows of peaceful opportunity, rare though they may be. Psalm 85 is a kind of communal prayer for revival written at a time when God's people were enduring a setback in their communal fortunes. The writer recognises the current reality of distress and alienation from God—despite memories of God's goodness in the past.

It reminds me of a poster I saw once of a motorcyclist riding into the fog following closely the white line down the centre of the road. The caption said, 'All I have seen teaches me to trust for all I have not seen.' That is part of our faith story.

As we hear again and again the history of God's relationship with people where there has been restoration and forgiveness and reconciliation we can dare to believe that it might happen again, even though when all around us we see loss and pain and division. As followers of Jesus we are called to live 'as if' (as if the gospel really is true, as if the Creator lives amongst us, as if we are empowered by the Spirit), keep-

ing the space open for the possibility of episodic justice, by not allowing ourselves to be defined by violence.

Judith Gundry Volf has written in a collection of essays called 'The Spacious Heart' about identity and belonging. She offers a theology for healing the world by embracing the other or others, including different ethnic groups, as we remain true to ourselves. We in Aotearoa New Zealand are people who, in our best moments, know about keeping space, about the wisdom of setting it aside for a purpose (like national parks, like the Maori concept of *rahui*), keeping it, caring for it appropriately and waiting for the right time to move forward.

The great insight of the psalmist was the ability to name the pain, to recall past experiences of goodness and to collectively hold on to that hope—all of which makes moving on possible. That process of empowerment through our collective past experience is a part of what has been called 'dangerous memory'. Every time we share in Eucharist we share in dangerous memory, telling the story that begins 'on the night before Jesus died', as we recall that death was not and is not the end.

We have a choice about how we respond to the violence of our world. Standing in the power of dangerous memory, preparing our spacious hearts and reflectively trusting that God will act again are indeed the ways that lead to peace.

Jenny Dawson is a president of CCA. This article is taken from a sermon presented at the annual forum of the Conference of Churches in Aotearoa New Zealand in September 2003.

# Myanmar Council of Churches

The Myanmar Council of Churches (MCC) was founded in 1914 as the Burma Representative Council of Missions (BRCM), which consisted of such major foreign missions as the Anglicans, Baptists, Lutherans and Methodists, and some ecumenical organisations such as the SCM, YMCA and the YWCA.

BRM was formed following the inspiration received by the missionaries and church leaders from the historical visit of Dr John R. Mott to Rangoon in January 1913, when he was on a worldwide missionary tour after the Edinburgh World Missionary Conference.

BRCM adopted the name Burma Christian Council in 1923 under the National Christian Council of India, Burma and Ceylon, as Burma was part of the one administrative territory under the British colony of India, Burma and Ceylon. In 1948, following Burma's independence, it became an autonomous national ecumenical body, the Burma Christian Council. In 1972, the Burma Christian Council was reconstituted as the Burma Council of Churches. It was

renamed the MCC in 1990 as the country's name was changed from Burma to Myanmar by the military government.

There are eight major ethnic racial/national groups in Myanmar, such as the Bamar, Chin, Kayah, Kayin, Mon, Rakhine and Shan. There are also significant populations of Chinese and Indians. The Bamars are the majority ethnic national group comprising about 60 per cent of the population. The seven minority ethnic groups together total less than 35 per cent of the population, and about 5 per cent are Chinese and Indians. Most of the ethnic minority groups are hilltribes and rural people. The estimated religious affiliation of Myanmar's population is Buddhist (87 per cent), Christian (6 per cent), Muslim (4 per cent), Hindu (1 per cent) and others (2 per cent). The Christian population has membership from all ethnic national groups. However, 90 per cent of Christians are Kayins, Kachins, Chins and Kayahs. There are very few Christians among Bamar, Rakhine, Shan and Mon, who have strong Buddhist backgrounds.



The Myanmar Ecumenical Sharing Centre in Yangon

## Purpose

The main purpose of the MCC is the unity of the churches in Myanmar through:

- mutual fellowship and mutual understanding,
- mutual acceptance and recognition in faith and practices of different churches,
- coordination and cooperation in common concerns of the churches,
- persistent endeavour towards organic unity of the churches.

## Functions

To achieve these, the MCC has adopted the following functions, implemented through various program units, departments and committees:

- to promote coordination and cooperation among the churches,
- to encourage contextual studies and joint actions in mission,
- to assist the churches for mutual recognition in faith and practice,
- to encourage to produce relevant Christian theologies for Myanmar,
- to promote mutual sharing of resources among the churches,
- to give assistance to any Christian body as and when requested,
- to take action on any Christian affairs as and when necessary,
- to do ecumenically all the activities of the council,
- to relate with international and regional ecumenical bodies, such as the WCC and CCA
- to promote and dialogue with people of other faiths,
- to establish an amicable relationship with the government and to act in accordance with the faith, practice and tradition of the churches together with and on their behalf on matters of Christian concerns.

## Members of the MCC

- Myanmar Baptist Convention (CCA and WCC member)
- Church of the Province of Myanmar (CCA and WCC member)
- Methodist Church, Upper Myanmar (CCA and WCC member)
- Mara Evangelical Church (CCA and WCC member)
- Presbyterian Church of Myanmar (CCA member)
- Methodist Church, Lower Myanmar (CCA member)

- Independent Presbyterian Church of Myanmar (CCA member)
- Lutheran Bethlehem Church
- St Gabriel's Congregational Union Church
- Salvation Army
- Self-supporting Kayin Baptist Mission Society
- Lisu Christian Church of Myanmar
- Evangelical Free Church of Myanmar

- Cooperating national ecumenical bodies
- National Council of YMCAs of Myanmar
  - National YWCA

- Bible Society of Myanmar
- Christian Literature Society of Myanmar
- Association of Theological Education in Myanmar
- Myanmar Christian Health Worker's Service Association
- Myanmar Christian Leprosy Mission
- Myanmar Youth for Christian Conference of Asia National Ecumenical Church Loan Fund of Myanmar

There are also over 25 corresponding local/regional councils of churches.

## Organisation and program thrusts

The Biennial General Meeting (BGM), which meets every two years, is the highest policy-making body. The board of management, which meets once a year, and the executive committee, which meets twice a year, are responsible for program guidance and decision making in between BGMs.

MCC's regular programs are carried out by the following units and departments.

### *Myanmar Ecumenical Institute*

MEI is constituted as a permanent institute for the formation and promotion of ecumenical spirit, actions and leadership for Myanmar and beyond. Some of its current programs are:

- Ecumenical leadership course

- Seminars and workshops on issues
- Ecumenical promotion with regional councils

### *Unit 1—Mission and Ecumenism Unit*

- Faith and Order
- Mission and Evangelism
- Urban Rural Mission
- Dialogue.

### *Unit 2—Service and Development*

- Relief and resettlement
- Integrated rural development projects
- Program for the differently abled people

### *Unit 3—Education and Communication Unit*

- Media awareness, media resources coordination and dissemination
- Ecumenical education and formation programs
- Children's education

- Functional literacy programs

### *Women's Department*

- Ecumenical women leadership training—local and national
- Women artistic skills development programs
- Legal service and assistance
- Micro-credit financing

### *Youth Department*

- Ecumenical youth leadership training
- Gospel and culture
- Youth ecumenical mobilisation and promotion
- Youth media production

### *University Christian Work*

- Ecumenical student movement building
- Leadership seminars and ecumenical Bible studies
- Volunteer work camps
- Women's concerns

### *Special committees and commissions*

- National Ecumenical Joint Commission of Myanmar Council of Churches and the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Myanmar
- Reconciliation and Peace Commission
- Public Relations Committee
- Ecumenical Scholarships Committee
- Gender Concern Committee
- Basic Medical Supply Committee
- HIV/AIDS prevention Committee

## Special challenges and issues

Some of the issues and challenges facing the MCC are national unity, reconciliation and peace, democratisation, human rights, violence and wars, poverty alleviation and migration.



A rural health care program of the Myanmar Council of Churches

# Peace, justice and life

A new world is possible, and the ecumenical movement needs to be energised by a new spirituality, a spirituality of hope and resistance, says Carmencita P. Karagdag

O God, with your judgment endow the king, and with your justice, the king's son;  
 He shall govern your people with justice and your afflicted ones with judgment.  
 The mountains shall yield peace for the people, and the hills justice.  
 He shall defend the afflicted among the people, save the children of the poor, and crush the oppressor.  
 May he endure as long as the sun, and like the moon through all the generations.  
 He shall be like rain coming down on the meadow, like showers watering the earth.  
 Justice shall flower in his days, and profound peace, till the moon is no more ...  
 and the afflicted when he has no-one to help him.  
 He shall have pity on the lowly and the poor; the lives of the poor he shall save.  
 From fraud and violence he shall redeem them, and precious shall be their blood in his sight.

Psalm 72:1–7, 12–14

I have chosen this passage because of the drawing power and special resonance of its theme, justice and peace, in these times fraught with conflicts, wars and threats to life. That these two core values and imperatives of the Christian faith are so deeply intertwined draws both parallelism and contrast with the inextricable link between globalisation, terrorism and war, which define the contours of the current global environment. It is this complex and deepening nexus between terrorism, war and globalisation that needs to be seriously addressed if we are to respond effectively to the crisis now afflicting the entire globe. In this critical juncture of history, the reign of God, of light and of life, faces grave challenges from the reign of false idols, of darkness and of death.

Global events since September 11, particularly the US-led war on terrorism, have seen the lone superpower flexing its muscle in every corner of the world, sowing terror, death and destruction. It has trampled human rights and the sovereign rights of nations with unprecedented impunity. It has resorted to pre-emptive military strikes and unilateral military action in defiance of international law and the United Nations. It has demonised nations, national liberation movements and revolutionaries—all deemed threats to US interests, indiscrimi-

nately labelling them rogue states, members of the 'axis of evil' and terrorists. It has launched its own jihad, with equal if not greater ferocity and capacity for death and destruction, against the new heathens of the world. Appropriating religious symbols, it is on a global crusade not just to eliminate so-called enemies of democracy and the American way of life, but to cast out and exorcise the demons.

All this terrifying chain of events is unfolding against the backdrop of a deepening economic and social crisis engulfing the whole world. As a project to restructure the world economy, globalisation was intended precisely to arrest the economic decline of industrial powers, caused largely by over-production and a shrinking market, and to extricate the leading agent of globalisation, the US, from the economic quagmire in which it has been trapped. A stubborn recession however has continued to bedevil the US, which has found temporary reprieve in intensified war production to stimulate its stalled economy. But globalisation has reaped benefits only for the privileged few, spawning countless victims of workers, peasants and indigenous peoples, who have been systematically dispossessed and uprooted.

That the world is now precariously sitting on a social volcano has been under-

lined by no less than the UN, which lamented in a recent report that the world is now divided between the super-rich and the desperately poor, with the richest 1 per cent or the world's population receiving as much income as the poorest 57 per cent. Vulnerable sectors—women, youth and children—are specially imperilled. Globalisation's lopsided free-trade agenda has pried open Third World markets for the unrestrained plunder by capital-rich and technologically advanced countries, whose own markets enjoy massive subsidies. Moreover, its homogenising dynamic and arrogant claims to universality have seriously undermined ethnic, cultural and religious diversity, exacerbating historically entrenched ethnic and religious tensions and causing deeper social fragmentation.

A region vital to US economic and geopolitical interests, Asia is once again the battleground, with Palestine, Afghanistan, Iraq and Iran all within the general vicinity of Asia. While lunging into Afghanistan last year, it opened in southeast Asia its second front of the war on terrorism, targeting militant Islamic nationalists in Indonesia and re-establishing its military presence in the Philippines, which not so long ago had dismantled America's largest military facility outside its territory. It has subverted Pakistan and fuelled its nuclear-arms race with

neighbouring India. Its determined drive to reclaim its hegemony in the Asia-Pacific region has raised tensions in China, the US's strategic rival in the region. Right now it is training its sights on North Korea, raising the spectre of nuclear conflagration on the Korean peninsula, and alarming neighbouring Japan, whose ruling right-wing party has practically thrown out the no-war provision of the Japanese constitution.

Under the pretext of forcing the Iraqi regime to get rid of its weapons of mass destruction, proof of which till now has not been established, the US waged an illegal and immoral war in hapless Iraq. While the war ended swiftly and a regime change was effected, the country soon descended into chaos, anarchy and factional strife. Attacks by Iraqi insurgents against American occupation forces have become bolder by the day, resulting in mounting American casualties since the war ended. The UN headquarters in Baghdad—most unfortunately—has not been spared, with terrorist suicide bombing costing the lives of numerous civilians, including the chief UN envoy to Iraq. Compounding the woes plaguing the US and its ally, Britain, in their forced occupation of Iraq are revelations that lies have been liberally fabricated and intelligence documents embellished, at the highest levels, in order to bolster the case for the war in Iraq.

The terrorist attacks in New York on 11 September provided the world's only superpower with the ideological weapon and quasi-religious justification to consolidate its control at home and abroad, silence or suppress its critics, violate human rights, expand its already vast economic and political influence, hand over the world's richest oilfields to the military-industrial complex, and establish an unparalleled hegemonic rule with a global reach unknown since the ancient Roman empire. As the Manila Covenant, issued by last year's International Ecumenical Conference on Terrorism in a Globalised World, declared: 'The war on terrorism is state terrorism of historic dimensions. This US global hegemony has a name. It is Empire.'

I was also struck by this passage in the context of the theme of the WCC's central committee, 'Caring for Life'. For to work



Carmencita P. Karagdag

actively for justice is to care for human and cosmic life, to promote life abundant, life in all its fullness for all of God's people and creation. The rich symbolism of 'rain coming down on the meadow like showers watering the earth' and mountains yielding peace for the people, and the hills justice, is an exquisite and most fitting paean to God's creation and a celebration of life in all its fullness and splendour. The quest for justice and peace is also the quest for integrity of creation. But globalisation's unfettered greed for profit and the wanton bombings to protect this profit have caused nearly irreversible environmental degradation.

The peace envisioned for humankind and the rest of God's creation is rich in meaning, referring to the profound sense of wholeness, of integrity, of harmony, of genuine community which happens only when the brokenness of relations with God, fellow humans and the rest of creation has been forsaken and fully overcome. Authentic peace, best captured by the word *shalom*, stands in stark contradiction to all that works against the wellbeing, dignity, rights and security of people, especially the poor, the afflicted and those with disabilities, the widows and orphans, the aliens, the captives and the oppressed for whom God has expressed preferential option. It stands in

complete contrast to anything that undermines the welfare, integrity as well as the rights of nations, ethnic communities and religious minorities. It is diametrically opposed to everything—be they nuclear, chemical and biological warfare or unmitigated despoliation of the life-support system to satisfy corporate greed—that threatens the integrity of creation and the sustainability of life itself on this planet.

In the same vein, the commitment to bring about justice is to defend life against death and destruction, to affirm the forces of life and to reject the forces of death. Hence the passage talks not just of peace as a gift of God or peace that is to be found, often if incorrectly implying a certain element of passivity that we usually associate with being peaceful. It also alludes to peace as a goal to proactively work for, build and nurture. In some contexts as in Asia, Africa and Latin America, and certainly in the Middle East, the very artisans of peace are challenged to be militant and ever vigilant against foreign intervention and threats to national dignity, to fight alongside the oppressed and struggle relentlessly against the forces of darkness in order to establish God's reign. A culture of peace can be built only on the foundations of just and righteous relations. Life for all of God's people and creation can be secured only in the context of persevering work for justice and peace. What the world needs to secure peace is not more globalisation and the primacy of a market that knows no morality, but a caring and sustainable economy, an inclusive and hospitable habitat for all of God's people and creation. To work for people's security and ecological wholeness in this context is to resist the very forces of globalisation and war. The text adumbrates God's enduring covenant to liberate and ransom the exploited, to save the lives of the poor, to crush their oppressors. From violence and death God shall redeem the poor and the lowly. For precious is their blood in God's sight.

The past two years since 11 September rocked the entire world as no other event in recent history has done, have been replete with tectonic-like shifts on the global landscape that have yet to be fully grasped.

Not since the collapse of the world socialist system and the end of the Cold War has the political map been so radically redrawn and the global milieu been so profoundly altered. As a result, old paradigms are breaking down and new ones are emerging. Old orthodoxies are disintegrating. The once-unassailable Washington consensus on the panacea known as globalisation has already broken down. In its place has risen a new, powerful anti-globalisation consensus, a radical and transformative globalisation from below.

Today, new forms of resistance and struggle are emerging. New alignments are shaping up. Witness the spectacularly huge throngs of people from all walks of life who gather in major world events seeking alternatives to globalisation, such as the World Social Forum in Porto Alegre. Witness the unbroken string of massive demonstrations

that have invariably accompanied all major meetings of the WTO, the World Bank, the IMF and the Group of Seven since the aborted round of free-trade talks in Seattle. Witness the mammoth anti-war coalitions and the unprecedented upsurge of mass protests, counting as many as 15 million marching all over the world, to oppose the war in Iraq.

'A new world is possible' has become the rallying cry of myriad and diverse groups resisting globalisation and war. To contribute creatively to this new movement for global renewal, the ecumenical movement needs to be energised by a new spirituality, a spirituality of hope and resistance. A new world order may have already emerged, provoking new political, economic and social configurations teeming with both crises and opportunities. How we in the ecumenical movement seize these opportu-

nities to overturn the crises can spell the difference between war and peace, between death and life. In these times of grave terror and mutual vulnerabilities, of fresh hopes and possibilities, we can only draw succour and strength from the God of love, mercy and compassion, the God of life in all its fullness and abundance, the God of liberation, justice and peace. This God is transcendental, inscrutable, beyond finite human definition. Yet this same God is a living, ever-present, loving and faithful God who irrupts in history, intervenes in the project of human liberation, takes flesh in the suffering and struggles of the poor.

CCA consultant Carmencita P. Karagdag delivered this reflection at the morning worship of the WCC executive committee meeting on 25 August 2003 at the Ecumenical Centre in Geneva.

## Ecumenical leader remembered

Twenty-two women gathered for the first Marga Buhrig Seminar, sponsored by the WCC Women's Program and hosted by Bishop Margot Kassman in Hanover, Germany, on 11–14 November 2003. The seminar was to honour the memory of an ecumenical woman and leader, Marga Buhrig (1915–2002) of Switzerland, whose basic tenet in life was 'to love life passionately and to seek justice passionately'. She became engaged in ecumenical women's work in Switzerland and Germany in 1946, and in the worldwide ecumenical movement since 1954 through the WCC's Department for the Cooperation of Men and Women in the Church, Family and Society. She was one of the presidents of the WCC from 1983 to 1991. A woman deeply involved in the ecumenical movement, particularly in relation to issues of justice, peace and the integrity of creation, she was a friend to women and a mentor to many.

This first seminar, moderated by Dr Janice Love, aimed at drawing inspiration from each other. In pairs, Marion Best and Anastacia Vasileiadou, Susan Henry-Crowe

and Mukami McCrum, Katarina Karkala-Zorbas and Suzanne Matala, Irja Askola and Corazon Tabing-Reyes initiated the discussions on respective issues: 'The Ecumenical Movement and Women', 'Justice at the Heart of Our Faith', 'Living in Community' and 'Our Bodies, Ourselves'. The women learned of diverse situations and common challenges. They affirmed the need for strategies in mentoring younger women, in making visible our energies and addressing justice issues in the church and in the world.

Aruna Gnanadason led the group in planning the next step ahead. Women need to address hard questions such as: What does solidarity mean to us women? How do we also affirm the strength of being different? How do we support each other as women with honesty and trust? How do we handle conflict? How do we prepare as women for the forthcoming general assembly in Porto Alegre? But even before that, there is the 'On the Wings of a Dove'—a global campaign on violence against women and children—from 25 November to 10 December 2004. More information on this campaign will be available soon through CCA. Daily worship and participatory Bible studies, led by Rev. Heike Bosien of Germany, strengthened participants in reflecting on biblical

women's stories, learning from their lessons and celebrating women's gifts in their faith heritage and in the ecumenical movement. Certainly this seminar once more affirmed that the resources of the ecumenical movement are people—women who are visible and those not visible, women who belonged to history, those who are still making history and those who are yet to come—all connect in a spiritual way.



Marga Buhrig



Prawate Khid-arn

Dr **Prawate Khid-arn** is CCA's new associate general secretary for finance, appointed by the general committee for a period of four years from 1 November 2003.

Prawate, a member of the Church of Christ in Thailand, has long experience in the ecumenical movement. He taught at Payap University in Thailand before joining the CCA in 1994 as an executive secretary, and was the acting associate general secretary for finance from January 2003 until the new appointment.

Prawate has served on the committees of various ecumenical initiatives such as Climate Change of the WCC, the Asian Migrant Centre, the Ecumenical Coalition on Tourism, and CCA-UN/ESCAP, HIV/AIDS and poverty alleviation programs. He has also worked for people-centred development, justice and peace issues and resource and financial mobilisation.

After graduating from Payap University, Prawate gained a Bachelor of Divinity degree and later took his masters degree from Thammasat University. His doctorate was awarded by the University of the Philippines.

Among the many meetings and consultations he has organised are those on empowerment of marginalised communities, globalisation, ecology, HIV/AIDS, healing ministries and alternate tourism.

Prawate is married to Somsri and they have a son and daughter.

\* \* \*

Dr **Lee Hong Jung**, theologian and expert on missiology from Korea, has been appointed the joint executive secretary of the Justice, International Affairs, Development and Service program area of CCA by the gen-

eral committee for a period of four years from 1 January 2004. Dr Lee, who is an ordained pastor of the Presbyterian Church of Korea (PCK), has been the director of planning, ecumenical relations and information in the general assembly office of PCK. He is a former director of the north-east Asia mission studies in the Selly Oak Colleges at the University of Birmingham



Lee Hong Jung

Lee comes to CCA with a rich ecumenical background. Among the international ecumenical events he has attended are the CCA general assemblies, including the last one at Tomohon, Indonesia, and the WCC assemblies, WARC assemblies, CWM and Deutscher Evangelischer Kirchentag in Leipzig and Berlin. He was one of the participants at the recently held Congress of Asian Theologians in Thailand.

One of his concerns is to promote theological understanding on empowering the web of life in Asia, including healing ministry, diakonia, reconciliation and conflict transformation.

Dr Lee took his graduate degree from the Seoul National University and a Master of Divinity from Presbyterian Theological College and Seminary in Seoul, Korea. Later, he earned a PhD from the University of Birmingham in England, where he also did studies on mission.

He is married to Shin Sea Sum and they have three children.

### Korea

Rev. Dr **Kim Soon Kwon**, a senior minister at the Kyungchun Church in Seoul, was elected moderator of the Presbyterian



Kim Soon Kwon

Church of Korea (PCK) at a meeting held in September at Jooan Church, Inchon. Rev Kim, a well-known poet and ecumenist, will lead the PCK till the next general assembly in September 2004. He was also elected as president of NCC Korea in November.



Kim Oc Nam

Rev Dr **Kim Oc Nam**, a senior pastor at the Cheonju Jungang Church, has been elected moderator of the Presbyterian Church in the Republic of Korea (PROK). He will serve till September 2004.

### Hong Kong

Rev. **Ralph Lee**, a senior minister at the Ward Memorial Methodist Church, has been serving as the president of the Methodist Church in Hong Kong.

\* \* \*

Rev. **Eric So**, general secretary of the Hong Kong Christian Council, has been elected chairperson of the executive committee of the Hong Kong Council of the Church of Christ in China.

## McGilvary Faculty of Theology

The McGilvary Faculty of Theology, Payap University, Chiang Mai, Thailand, will offer an MDiv degree in English, beginning in September 2004. The curriculum follows the standards set by the Association for Theological Education in Southeast Asia (ATESEA) and other well-known theological schools abroad.

The three-year curriculum offers courses in Asian theology and many of the courses are geared to the Asian reality. The program is open to students from Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos and Myanmar and interested students from other foreign countries. Some scholarships will be available to deserving students.

The beginnings of McGilvary Faculty of Theology go back to 1867, when the first Presbyterian missionary to northern Thailand, Dr Danile McGilvary, opened his house to train leaders for the newly established churches.

The school grew to become the Thailand Theological Seminary several years later. TTS was one of the bodies that formed the nucleus of Payap University, the first private university in Thailand, when it was established in 1974. After it became fully integrated with the university, the seminary was renamed the McGilvary Faculty of Theology. It is committed to the preparation of men and women for ministry and leadership of the church for the proclamation of the mighty acts of God.

Inquiries and applications may be directed to the Dean or the Director of International MDiv Studies, McGilvary Faculty of Theology, Payap University, Chiang Mai 50000, Thailand, email [mft@payap.ac.th](mailto:mft@payap.ac.th).

## Tasmanian Council of Churches

Please note the new address of the Tasmanian Council of Churches: General Secretary, Tasmanian Council of Churches, GPO Box 1130, Hobart Tas 7001, Australia.

# CCA's Twelfth General Assembly

## Building communities of peace for all

Planning is well under way for the twelfth General Assembly of the Christian Conference of Asia to be held from 31 March to 6 April 2005 in Chiang Mai, Thailand. The theme for the conference is 'Building communities of peace for all'.

## CCA General Assembly logo



The winner of the prize for a design to be used on the poster and publications for CCA's 12th General Assembly is Hanna Cheriyan Varghese of Selangor, Malaysia. Hanna's design is based on the assembly theme, 'Building communities of peace for all', and the original is in vibrant colours. It consists of an amandala sunburst of yellow and orange in a human chain circle forming the peace communities around the world. Other colours used are green, the colour of the earth, and blue, the colour of the universe, infinity and hope. A poster incorporating the logo will be distributed shortly.

# New CCA publications

## CTC Bulletin

This is the bulletin of the program area on Faith, Mission and Unity [Theological Concerns] of CCA. The annual subscription is CCA region US\$7, other regions US\$15.

The December 2002 – August 2003 issue contains a number of stories that came out of a consultation held last year in Cairns, Australia, which focused on the theme, 'Journeying Together with Indigenous Peoples in Their Search for Life'. Also included are three lectures delivered by Dr Judo Poerwowidagdo on the role of the ecumenical movement in conflict transformation towards peace building in Asia.

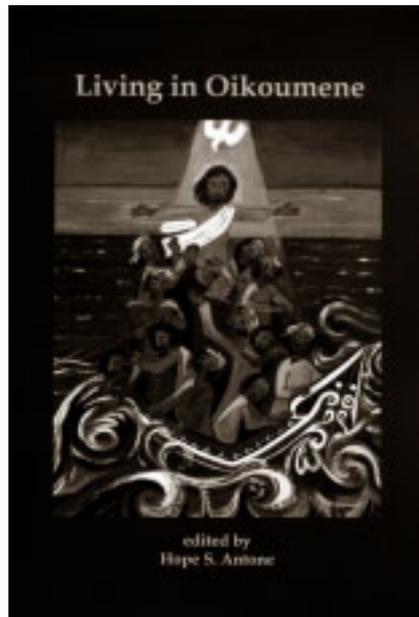
CTC BULLETIN	
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PAK TIN VILLAGE, MEI TIN ROAD, SHATIN, HONG KONG  
ISSN 0217 2631

## Christ and the Tao

by Heup Young Kim

This volume is a collection of essays published in various journals over the past few years by Heup Young Kim, professor of systematic theology at Kangnam University, Korea. (See review on page 31.)



## Living in Oikoumene

edited by Hope S. Antone

This book is a collection of the presentations made during the 45th anniversary celebration and international symposium of CCA on 6–8 August 2002. With the theme, 'New Ecumenism', the celebration was a time to reflect on the past, the present and the future of the regional ecumenical movement in Asia.

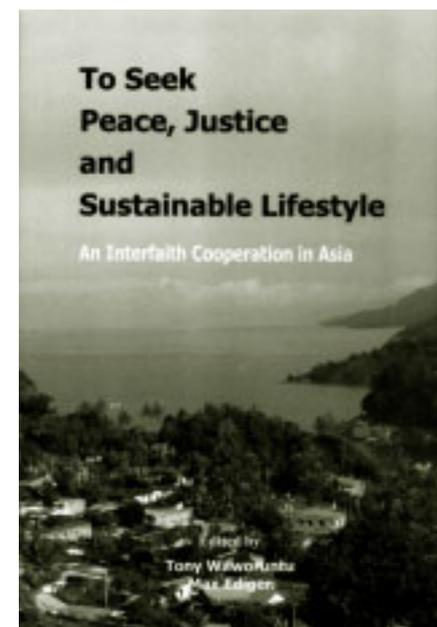
In his anniversary service sermon the CCA general secretary, Ahn Jae Woong, explained the need for 'New Ecumenism' as a way of reclaiming the radical meaning of the essence of ecumenism, the seeds of which had been planted by the pioneers of CCA.

The book is divided into three sections: the biblical-theological bases of oikoumene, the past, present and future of ecumenism, and the challenges of living in oikoumene.

## To Seek Peace, Justice and Sustainable Lifestyle

An Interfaith Cooperation in Asia  
edited by Tony Waworuntu and Max Ediger

This book considers an important task we as religious communities have is to find real and genuine solutions as to why some people become so extreme and use religions for their own sake and benefits. We need to reflect on the role of religions in building and binding communities and to seek ways to help people create and maintain their identities against all forms of evil. We perceive the divine in several ways and have chosen to ignore the fact that this sense of relationship with the divine is something that we share in common with others.



Order copies from the Christian Conference of Asia, 96 2nd District, Pak Tin Village, Mei Tin Road, Sha Tin NT, Hong Kong SAR, China. Telephone + 852 2691 1068. email [cca@cca.org.com](mailto:cca@cca.org.com)

# The spirituality of bamboo

Masao Takenaka, *When the Bamboo Bends: Christ and Culture in Japan*, WCC Risk Book Series no. 100, 2002, 86 pp, illustrated

Sheep, bread and grapes, among other things, just do not work. Not in Japan they don't, and not in many other Asian countries. That is Masao Takenaka's problem.

Or rather, it is what Takenaka sees as the church's problem. Symbols that have served the gospel perfectly well elsewhere sometimes seem quite foreign in this part of the world. They do not function effectively for us as bearers of meaning, because culturally they do not belong. Yet the Christian faith needs its symbols.

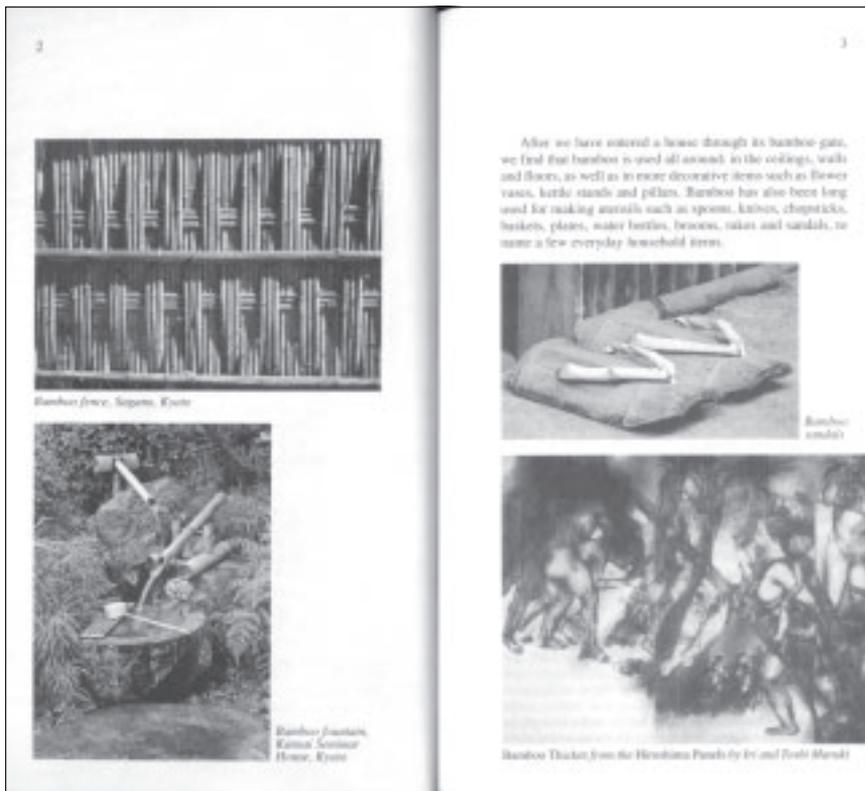
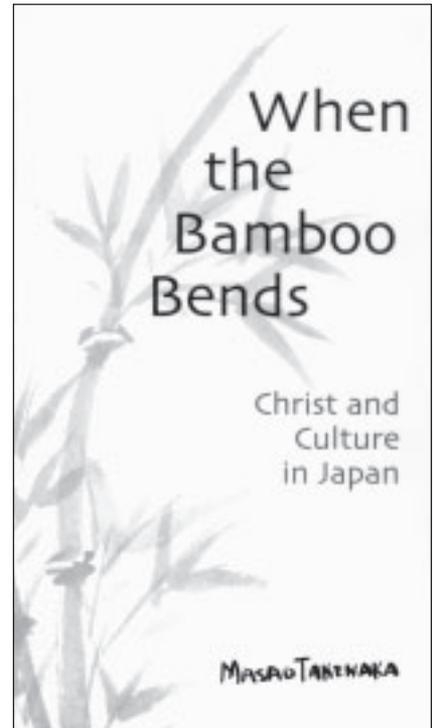
So what to do?

Find symbols earthed in the Asian setting, answers this well-known Japanese theologian. Explore images that are basic to life here and see in what ways they too may be bearers of the mystery. Hence his suggestive *God is Rice*, published by the

WCC in 1986. Now, in a companion book, also in the WCC's excellent 'Risk' series, he invites us to contemplate that most Asian of all plants, the bamboo.

Not that we're the first to contemplate it. Before many pages are past, it dawns on the reader that many have been down this road before. Christians, with imagination and sensitivity, have been using bamboo for religious purposes for decades, even centuries. Examples are offered from Japan, China and the Philippines.

True to character, Takenaka is not content to deliver his message in words. At least a third of the space is given to well-chosen illustrations that stimulate as well as inform. There are bamboo groves and screens, Luke Chen's painting of a bamboo-bracketed Jesus and children and Carlos Francisco's



'The Madonna of Bamboo'. The chapter dealing with the spirituality of bamboo is best. Here Takenaka unpacks some of the plant's characteristics—its flexibility, its empty centre, the strong roots that, though hidden, are the source of its strength—and relates these to the man of the cross. Indeed, it is suggested, religious symbols that are earthed in a shared culture can make for deeper understanding between Christians and those of other faiths. Bamboo can, among other things, build bridges.

The writer's style is discursive, at times too much so. Any reader expecting a case to be argued discovers quickly that it isn't that kind of book. It wanders. Tighter editing would have improved it.

Still, wandering is a pleasure, and a spiritual education, when you have someone like Masao Takenaka as your travelling companion.

—David Gill

(Rev. David Gill is the pastor of Kowloon Union Church in Hong Kong.)

Bamboo in the house—from 'Bamboo as a symbol' in 'When the Bamboo Bends'

# A new paradigm of Asian theology

Heup Young Kim, *Christ and the Tao*, Christian Conference of Asia, 2003, 186 pp.

Prof. Kim Heup Young's book is the fruit of a serious theological reflection in the intellectual context of East Asia where the Confucian and Taoist philosophical framework has been decisive in all aspects of the life of the peoples. This book is composed of six separate articles. Though they are written separately they form an organic whole and are interconnected.

In the first part of the book, the author engages in a Confucian-Christian dialogue, using two sets of thinkers. The first set is 'Wang Yang Ming and Karl Barth' and the second set is 'Yi Toe Gye [a great Confucian scholar] and John Calvin'. Prof. Kim regards this engagement as a part of his theological enterprise. He discusses meetings of three sets of ideas between Confucian Ch'eng and Christian agape, between the Confucian Liang-chih (Inner Sage) and the Christian notion of the humanity of Christ, and between the Confucian T'ien-ming (heavenly mandate) and the Christian Imago Dei. In the second part of his book, Prof Kim develops a Christian theological link with the east Asian philosophical notion of Tao, leading to a Christological reflection, and makes an important Christological statement that 'Christ is Tao'.

Prof. Kim states his theological enterprise as follows: 'Asian theology as an integrated articulation of the Asian Christian community of faith about God, humanity and life in the world should not only be emancipatory, but also open-minded, ideological, ecological and inclusive. We should construct a new paradigm of Asian theology that can break down the vicious cycle of the socioeconomic injustice prevailing in Asia and at the same time that can own up to Asian religions and Asian religions and cultures as part of our identities.'

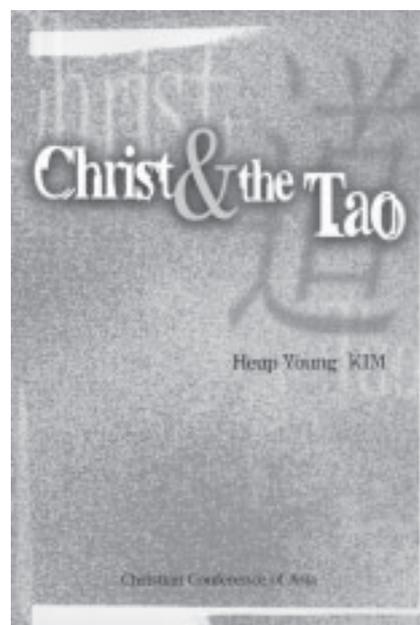
The three focuses in this statement are that Asian theology should be radically

emancipatory and liberational in relation to socioeconomic and political justice, which are radically inclusive in relation to gender justice and radically integral and holistic in relation to the integrity of life. He says, 'Theotao as a tao of Asian people invite us to participate in the common quest for our true subjectivity, in solidarity with the exploited life including Minjung, women and polluted nature.'

In many of our Asian theological efforts, such as indigenisation, the liberation motive has been weak due to emphases on indigenous religions and cultures, which should be subjected to theological scrutiny in regard to issues of justice. Prof. Kim sends out his theological trajectory into an emancipatory orbit. This is a remarkable definition of the theological task. In taking Asian religions, philosophies and cultures as theological resources, Asian theology should be clear in the affirmation of a liberative and healing spirituality in religion, identity and creativity in culture, justice in socioeconomics, politics and geopolitics and integrity and wholeness in the cosmos of life. Prof. Kim is embarking in this direction in his construction of Asian theology.

I wish to point out three distinct contributions in Prof. Kim's theological construction. The first is taking Asian religious, philosophical and cultural foundations and ideas to tackle the historical issues of Asian people in a Christian perspective. The ideas of freedom, liberation and justice are thought to be of Western origin and, therefore, it is wrongly believed that the Western Christian theology contains those dynamics, and that Christianisation, Westernisation and modernisation are closely connected and liberational. Prof. Kim points a new direction in Asian theology.

Secondly, Prof. Kim takes an Asian cos-



mic religious and philosophical framework to tackle the issue of integrity of life in the cosmos. He realises that Western philosophy and modern science has fundamental flaw in dealing with this question. In his discussion of the Tao, this is clearly stated.

Thirdly, I believe that Prof Kim has taken a very important step to develop an Asian pneumatology in a Christian perspective.

Prof. Kim is quite a Christological thinker in all these developments. This is natural because Calvin and Barth are Christological and East Asian religions and philosophies invite Christological thinking, rather than abstract theological thinking. The cosmos and humanity are one in which God is present. This invites a Christological direction.

We are aware that many Asian theologians are engaged in creative theological engagement. We have this tradition in the past, and we are embarking on a new stage of Asian theological construction. This is taking place in China, represented by K.H. Ting, in India, represented by Dalit theology, and also in Asian feminist theology, represented by many Asian women theologians. I see in Kim's work this creative theological engagement.

—Kim Yong Bock

(Prof. Kim Yong Bock is Chancellor of the Advanced Institute for the Study of Life, Korea.)

# Jesus Immanuel

Salavador T. Martinez

Born of a woman in a humble dwelling;  
Announced by the angels in clouds rejoicing  
To shepherds in fields while with the flocks watching;  
Honoured by wise men with gifts believing.

## Refrain

Jesus Immanuel,  
Saviour of all people,  
Your love has made us whole;  
Your name is wonderful!

The deep agony of the cross you endure,  
Taking upon your self the burden of the world.  
Through your death salvation for all is made sure  
To all who call to you as Lord and Saviour.

Christ our Lord, we implore your loving kindness.  
We are sinners, in need of your forgiveness.  
Open our hearts so to let you come and dwell;  
Help us to trust that in your care we are well.

O Christ of all mercy, Lord of righteousness—  
Give us faith to endure in times of distress;  
Give us strength to wage against injustices;  
Give us courage to live as your witnesses.



Chiang Mai, 28 May 2003

Dr Salvador (Buddy) T. Martinez, a former staff member of CCA and an ordained minister of the United Church of Christ in the Philippines, is currently the international associate of the Common Global Ministries Board, the mission arm of the United Church of Christ (USA) and the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). He teaches theology and ethics at the McGilvary Faculty of Theology, Payap University, Chiang Mai, Thailand.