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AUGUST 1998

CCA NEWS



Journey to Unity—CCA at Asian Bishops' Synod

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Cover: 'Christ Our Peace' by Jonathon T. Carpio.
The artist picks up the theme of Ephesians 2:14-15,
that Christ has made us all one, different people
coming together through the power of God's Spirit.
(Courtesy 'The Bible through Asian Eyes')

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EDITORIAL

In the last issue of *CCA News*, I noted the more propitious moments with which we started the year, mentioning specially the improved financial condition we have achieved. The report given by our Finance Staff to the last meeting of the Executive Committee in May this year came out even better. As of May this year, we have erased the large deficit with which we started the term. For the first time in a long time in the history of the CCA, we have a balanced budget. In fact, we even have a little surplus. It was not easy to reach this status. There were very hard decisions that had to be made in terms of reducing overheads and operations, instituting a greater degree of financial responsibility and in cutting off expenditures. There were also generous unexpected grants we received to help us cover previous excesses. All in all, however, we can move from here on with some degree of institutional and financial integrity. Alongside the fact that we have also succeeded in installing a new financial management system, which began operation in February this year, we hope we can continue to maintain a sense of organisational responsibility that will add to our credibility in the future.

We have been warned, and quite rightly so, however, that achieving institutional stability does not necessarily mean keeping or regaining institutional charisma. At a time when the charisma of the ecumenical movement seems to be losing both impact and appeal everywhere, and at every point in the life of church and society, it is important to bear this warning in mind as we move to the last half of the present term, and especially towards the CCA Assembly in the year 2000—an assembly that will usher us into the next century and millennium with all the new challenges and pressures that these will put upon us. Where does ecumenical charisma lie and what does it mean in the new age that is dawning on us?

Some of the items of news that are reported in this issue of *CCA News* indicate some answers, though perhaps still very tentative and even halting ones. The report on the CCA's participation in the recently concluded Special Assembly of the Synod of Bishops that was held in Rome in April–May this year reminds us that the manifestation of the gift of Christian unity remains perhaps the critical dimension of the life of the ecumenical movement, and that continuing failure to give more concrete expression to this could mean further incalculable, if not fatal, damage to ecumenical life and work in the years ahead. Various items that deal with issues that emerge out of new economic, social and political situations seem to tell us that the gift of critical study and reflection, exercising the symbols and meanings of faith in a changing world, might be another area where ecumenical charisma might express itself. The appeal of the study group on 'The Religious Situation' that met in Bossey recently (see the report on page 21 of this issue of *CCA News*) for a 'fresh language' that embodies a 'fresh analytical approach to new situations and issues' falls in this area of ecumenical renewal. A participant in the study project noted that it is time for the ecumenical movement to begin to put together the ingredients for the writing of some 'classics' rather than the production of 'tracts'.

(Continued on page 8)

Asian Economic Crisis

CCA calls on all concerned to look beyond exchange rates and austerity measures to political and social reform

The Officers and Executive Committee of the Christian Conference of Asia, meeting in Hong Kong, China, on 13–14 May, have authorised the issuing of the following statement.

The economic crisis that has engulfed Asia so swiftly over the past year has already devastated the economies of several countries in both South East and North East Asia.

A Cancerous Growth

The Asian economic crisis, which started in financial and currency markets, has spread like a cancerous growth into other parts of the economy and now affects the total economic well-being of the countries affected. Its contagion is bound to affect other parts of Asia as well, and even other parts of the world. During the past several months, the 'rising economies' and 'tiger economies' of Asia—Indonesia, Thailand, Malaysia, Philippines, Japan and South Korea, who in recent years have experienced some astounding prosperity in their economies—have been undergoing very severe economic difficulties, resulting in manifold problems in the lives of their people and their economic, social and political wellbeing. The amount of resources that have already been lost, and the devastation and suffering that has overcome the lives of people and institutions, especially those that belong to the most vulnerable sectors in society, make this economic crisis the most serious and encompassing in recent history. The economic and social progress that had been achieved in the past several decades has begun to collapse.

While the outlook today seems slightly better than it was some months back, it is clear that the crisis is now more than economic and will continue to have wider implications. Already millions of people have been thrown out of employment and poverty and hunger are on the increase. The longer the crisis lasts, the deeper the roots of discontent and unrest will be embedded into the fabric of social and political life. This social and political unrest in some Asian countries has, in fact, already created turmoil. In several Asian countries confidence in the political leadership has

been eroded. People are enraged over the downturn and meltdown in their economic situation, and the personal and social uncertainty, rising unemployment, increasing price hikes and falling living standards these have entailed.

The situation in Indonesia, where political uncertainty, riots, panic buying and popular protests have spread, is an example of this situation, and could be a foretaste of things that may come in other Asian countries.



Poverty and hunger are on the increase

become incapable of coping with and regulating the admixture of quick capital accounts, and the liberalisation and increasingly global movement of capital in countries where there are no efficient mechanisms to monitor these movements and to prevent sudden volatility. In a very sharp way, the Asian financial crisis poses serious questions and raises important signals about how the new world economy will work and what prospects it really gives for developing countries to develop and prosper in the long run.

Serious Questions

The situation could be seen as a crisis in the globalisation of the economy and of the situation where governments have

Deep Concerns

The Christian Conference of Asia (CCA) joins others in expressing deep concern about the current Asian economic situation. Among the many aspects of this crisis, CCA expresses special mention of several areas of concern:

- CCA is especially concerned and distressed about the consequences and the social impact the crisis has engendered in the affected countries. There have already been substantial retrenchments in different labour sectors. There have been abrupt declines in new job opportunities as well, a condition that will ultimately affect the employment prospects of new entrants into the labour market and the reemployment prospects of displaced workers. Adverse development of this magnitude constitutes a substantial glut in any social system, and its effects will be amplified severely in various aspects of social life. Already manifestations of social chaos and anxiety are visible in some of the Asian countries in which the economic meltdown has occurred.
- CCA is equally concerned that, as the financial crisis continues to unfold, economic grievances may increasingly take on an ethnic and religious character. In Indonesia, reports on the crisis have given indications of and sounded alarms about attacks on ethnic Chinese, many of whom are Christians. There are incidents involving other ethnic groups as well, for example incidents where Muslim traders from the Bugis ethnic group have become the focus of resentment and possible targets of attacks.
- Migrant workers are particularly vulnerable as a result of the economic crisis. Malaysia initially announced that it would be sending back one million foreign workers, mostly Indonesians, and some Bangladeshis and Filipinos. Thailand has announced a new crackdown on 800,000 supposedly illegal migrants, mostly Burmese. The expulsion of foreign workers has often resulted in



PHOTO: GARRIGE HO, SOUTH CHINA MORNING POST

physical violence against them and their families, especially when they are considered scapegoats for the social and economic ills that have overcome the rest of the population. We ask everyone concerned to be vigilant over these occurrences and prevent them from happening.

- CCA is concerned that as political unrest grows, the use of force to suppress rightful protest and dissenting voices will escalate. We express apprehension that such a situation can lead to a situation of using 'black laws' to detain critics and opponents, specially student, labour, and religious activists. The danger of rampant and increased violations of human rights is pervasive in such a situation, and we hope that this can be avoided.

What Can Be Done

In this situation, CCA wishes to express the following sentiments:

- We strongly feel that no economic or political crisis can or will be resolved by violations of human rights, and we urge everyone concerned about the economic crisis in Asia to look beyond exchange rates and austerity measures to the political reforms that are needed to stabilise and alleviate the situation.
- We are concerned that the conditions put forward by the international financial institutions in order to bail out affected countries have invariably hit the poor the hardest and made life for them more difficult. The structural adjustment measures imposed by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank (WB) as prerequisites for the release of loans to the affected countries, and other conditions they have imposed, add even more burdens to the poor and marginalised in society. They create the conditions of social and political unrest that we want to avoid. In this situation we believe that all Asian governments should assert their power and authority to retain the original functions and mandates of the IMF

(Continued on page 6)

The Indonesian Situation

A call to the Indonesian government to respect the aspirations of all its people

The Officers and Executive Committee of the Christian Conference of Asia, meeting in Hong Kong, China, on 13–14 May, have authorised the issuing of the following statement.

The situation of unrest and dislocation that has engulfed Indonesia in recent days has clearly reached incredibly alarming proportions, and CCA joins people all over Asia and the world in viewing it with deep concern. A crisis that started with the onslaught of economic and financial chaos has now clearly evolved into a critical and severe social and political crisis as well, much to the detriment and suffering of the Indonesian people. The astounding devaluation of the Indonesian currency, the soaring of prices of essential commodities, the massive layoff of workers and heightening unemployment, the deterioration of living standards—all these and more happen at an appalling pace and with a pervasive deterioration of human well-being. Whatever else is said or purported about the resolution of the crisis and of improving conditions in the future, it simply has to be said, as so many others have said, that the monetary currency system is collapsing and that the government, despite claims to the contrary and despite the assistance of international financial agencies and supportive countries, simply has been unable to arrest this collapse and restore financial stability. An appallingly increasing loss of confidence and trust of an ever-widening number of its own people now confronts the Indonesian government. Indonesia and its people face a frightening economic, social and political crisis of a magnitude and depth that has not been seen in its national life in recent decades.



CCA calls on all members of Indonesian society to work for and promote peace with justice, communal harmony, unity and prosperity for the nation and all of its people

Social Unrest

The manifestations and symptoms of the crisis are unmistakable. Social discontent and unrest have now turned into riots. Voices of dissent and expressions of grievances against what is considered a corrupt economic and political administration are met at gunpoint.

The kidnapping and killing of political dissidents have become common. Students who demonstrate for reforms and social activists who seek relief from the burdens of the sudden downturn in their economic condition are openly suppressed. Human rights violations are rampant everywhere. Signs of ethnic and inter-religious conflict have become more palpable and numerous. Indeed, today, as we meet, news of the shooting of students in Jakarta and other places in Indonesia reaches us, and we are told of an increasing number of deaths and injuries, of the escalation of the use of violence, and of a widening wave of Indonesians fleeing their own country in order to seek haven and relief in neighbouring countries. The situation has clearly deteriorated considerably and it is grave.

Solidarity with the Churches in Indonesia

In this situation of great distress and suffering to people in Indonesia and of clear signs of a heightening sense of economic, social and political unrest, CCA expresses its great concern and

wishes all to know its sentiments. Beyond anything else, it expresses its solidarity and companionship with the Communion of Churches in Indonesia (PGI) and its member churches, and with all those who have been struck with so much harm and pain by the prevailing conditions of uncertainty and deprivation.



In particular, it expresses its solidarity with the stand of the PGI on the current situation and the actions it has taken to respond to this situation of economic, social and political turmoil.

Political Reforms Needed

CCA notes with a deep sense of sorrow and regret that financial stability seems no longer possible under the conditions of present political governance in Indonesia. In short, economic stability can no longer be restored and recovery can no longer be attained unless these are accompanied by well-needed political reforms, unless changes occur in the manner of political governance that can restore the trust and confidence of the Indonesian people. CCA expresses its solidarity, its prayers and its supplications to God for those people and movements who, at obviously great sacrifice of their wellbeing, are seeking and demanding the much-needed reforms that they think will trigger renewal and reconstruction. CCA urges the Indonesia government to respect

and give proper consideration to the aspirations of various sectors of Indonesian society who have demanded greater democratic space and who seek a more participatory political structure.

Human Rights

CCA urges the Indonesian government to institute immediate measures to protect the human rights of all in Indonesia, to release political prisoners, and to ensure in all circumstances a respect for human dignity and fundamental freedoms in accordance with national laws and international standards.

Peace

The CCA finally underscores the need for all members of Indonesian society to work for and promote peace with justice, communal harmony, unity and prosperity for the nation and all of its people.

(Margaret Rodgers, Yotaro Konaka, Aye Mo Tin,
Kenneth Fernando—Presidents
Feliciano V. Cariño—General Secretary
Susan Li-Shu Chang—Honorary Treasurer)



Asian Economic Crisis

(Continued from page 4)

and oppose any changes in the original articles of agreement that will benefit only the economically rich countries in the

world. We are concerned further in this regard about the policy and power nexus between the IMF and its major shareholders and feel that the IMF-prescribed policies will accelerate economic contradictions that neither stabilise currencies nor restore market confidence. Finally, in this regard, we urge Asian governments to use whatever power they have to discourage, if not put a stop to, the grip of currency trading and currency speculation that is exercised over global, regional and national economies. We have come to know that such trading and speculation create a situation of putting the weak and

the vulnerable at the mercy of the rich and powerful, and this must be stopped.

- We feel that Asian governments need to introduce greater accountability and transparency in their economic and financial transactions and at the same time work towards putting up more effective and appropriate national and international mechanisms and systems to monitor, regulate and control international financial flows.
- Finally, we emphasise the need to strengthen an atmosphere of political and social stability, a condition of economic, social and political life that is geared towards the elimination of corruption, and a political order that enshrines the prevalence of the rule of law and of good governance, adherence to democratic values and the protection of human rights and human dignity in Asian countries.

(Margaret Rodgers, Yotaro Konaka, Aye Mo Tin,
Kenneth Fernando—Presidents
Feliciano V. Cariño—General Secretary
Susan Li-Shu Chang—Honorary Treasurer)

Migrant Workers

CCA calls for the ratification of the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families

The Officers and Executive Committee of the Christian Conference of Asia, meeting in Hong Kong, China, on 13–14 May, have authorised the issuing of the following statement.

Millions of people move from place to place, from country to country, around the world today. They live, or try to live, in countries that are not their own. A large number of these people earn their livelihood or look for employment in places where they are strangers, and where they are often treated as strangers. They are called migrant workers and aliens. Often, for this reason alone, they become the targets of mistrust or hatred in the societies where they have to live and work. Discrimination against migrant workers exists in many forms. Most of them live in unsatisfactory living conditions. Low income, high living costs, difficult working conditions, lack of legal, social and other security measures, the loss of cultural identity, and much more, affects their total wellbeing and includes their families. The fundamental rights of migrant workers are violated or ignored. They face constantly the gravest risks to their human dignity, rights and basic freedoms, from the way in which they are recruited to the manner in which their labour contracts, their job security, and the conditions of their work are laid down. Until the very end of their work, their status and legal protection are never certain and secure.

The rights and wellbeing of migrant workers' families are also often under threat and insecure. Many are considered unqualified to belong to any of the groups that come under legitimate protection or privilege, such as citizens,

refugees, and registered foreign workers. As such, the protection and promotion of the rights of migrants have become one of the more challenging and urgent issues of economic, social, political and ethical considerations in our time. On the plane of international life and relations, they pose in a very sharp way the need to promote and develop internationally accepted standards for the treatment of migrants, and for the elaboration and understanding of the fact that migrants' rights are human rights that deserve universal acceptance and adherence.

In this context, the adoption by the General Assembly of the United Nations (UN) of the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families in December 1990 is an event of monumentally significant proportions. This is specially true in regard to the effort to develop and enforce international protection mechanisms for migrants. Unfortunately, however, the convention has not yet 'entered into force'. The rule that twenty UN member states must ratify the convention in

order for it to enter into force has so far not been satisfied. To date, only nine member states have ratified or acceded to the convention. Although more than seven million Asians work outside their own country, only two Asian Countries, the Philippines and Sri Lanka, have ratified the convention.

The decision of the UN General Assembly to draw up the convention was a strong affirmation of international concord in regard to the necessity for greater protection of the human rights of migrants. However, seven years after its adoption, and after much effort has been exerted to promote its application, the ratification of the convention that would enter it into force has not happened.



Recommendations

In the light of these considerations, and recognising the importance of the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Their Families, the Christian Conference of Asia:

- considers the ratification of the convention to be a matter of urgency
- urges all governments in Asia to follow the example set by two Asian countries, the Philippines and Sri Lanka, in ratifying the convention
- calls upon all its member churches and councils to take the initiative of promoting the rights of migrant workers and urge their respective governments to ratify the convention in order to secure ratification of, or accession to, the convention by the greatest possible number of states as early as possible



SARATH KIRINDE (SRI LANKA): SOLIDARITY AMONG THE WORKERS (COURTESY CHRISTIAN ART IN ASIA)

- welcomes and supports the global campaign initiated by the International Migrants Rights Watch Committee
- calls on member churches and councils to become part of the IMRWC network and strengthen the global campaign in order to achieve the goal of making the convention enter into force so that it becomes a real force for protecting the basic rights and dignity of all migrants
- urges all Asian governments to introduce legal measures at the national level to guarantee the protection of the rights of all migrant workers in the sending and host countries.

(Margaret Rodgers, Yotaro Konaka, Aye Mo Tin,
Kenneth Fernando—Presidents
Feliciano V. Cariño—General Secretary
Susan Li-Shu Chang—Honorary Treasurer)

EDITORIAL

(Continued from page 2)

Finally, reports of the passing away of a number of ecumenical leaders tell us that the quality of people that provide ecumenical leadership is another area of ecumenical charisma that needs replenishment. As the tradition of church and society has so strongly inculcated, we need not only a new definition of issues but also the identification of new people who can help us address these issues and assist us and the churches in continuing to struggle with them. The cutting edge of ecumenical formation lies in the recognition of this need.

Unfortunately for us, our recognition of the immense new challenges that we need to face comes with the stark realization of the contraction of ecumenical material resources.

The current economic 'meltdown' that is affecting Asian and other societies tells us that it is the task of ecumenical leadership in the years ahead to continue to forge a vision within a context of contracting resources, or within a context of seeking new resources that could help propel new visions.

(Feliciano V. Cariño)

Korean Reconciliation and Reunification

A five-person CCA delegation attended an International Conference for Peace and Reunification organised by the National Council of Churches in Korea, 18–20 June 1998. This conference was followed by a peace march and a televised musical festival organised by a multireligious coalition. The Korean people, in staging these two public events, were enjoying a new degree of political expression since the election of the country's new President, Kim Dae Jung.

Yotaro Konaka (President), Feliciano Cariño (General Secretary), Tony Waworuntu (CCA International Affairs Committee), Christine Ledger (Associate General Secretary) and Mathews George Chunakara (CCA International Affairs Coordinator), by their presence, demonstrated the continuing concern in the ecumenical community for peace and reunification to be realised on the Korean peninsula.

Mathews George Chunakara presented the following paper, which details this concern.

Reconciliation and Reunification of the Korean Peninsula and CCA's Concern

The Korean people's ultimate desire, wherever they are living in the world (in South Korea or North Korea or outside these countries), is the reconciliation and reunification of their homeland. The division of Korea in 1945 has caused pain and agony for millions of people and a loss of opportunities for Korea to participate in international affairs. Other countries have taken advantage of the division of the Korean peninsula and exploited it. The tendency for the two Koreas to use each other for their own political considerations and ideological differences has acted as a perplexing obstacle to reunification all these years. The division has taken an enormous toll, both direct and indi-

rect, even in the context of the changing international relations.

However, since the end of the Cold War the climate surrounding the reunification of the Korean peninsula has been changing rapidly. This is quite different from the past—there is now a growing consensus among Korean people of the historical necessity of reunification. A large number of people believe that overcoming the national division is the greatest task facing the Koreans.

The changing political situation and the transformed environment for reunification are reducing the military tension between North and South Korea. This invites an alteration in the national interests of the major players

surrounding the Korean peninsula. This needs to be analysed carefully and looked at closely as the dynamics of international relations are changing fast. For example, the new developments centred on the Korean peninsula heighten the possibility of adversarial competition between the two Koreas in non-militant areas. Those who are seriously concerned about events taking place in the arena of changing international power equations in the context of globalisation of trade and liberalisation of markets and the world moving in the direction of geoeconomics cannot reject the fact that due to external factors and outside interests a confrontational relationship between the two Koreas will not disappear easily, especially politically. For example, North Korea has moved closer to the United States and Japan. This closeness could single out South Korea as their archenemy or delay the real unification process. In other words, the two Koreas will be again exploited by other powers in order to retain their supremacy and keep their economic and strategic interests in the region.

In this context, the ecumenical movement has to think about its new role in strengthening peace and reconciliation in the Korean peninsula. It has to search for a new vision and strategies to fulfil its mission. The Christian Conference of Asia has been part of the global ecumenical movement in its sincere efforts to promote peace and reunification of the two Koreas. CCA recognises the strong de-



Gathering for the peace march in Seoul

termination among Christians in both North and South Korea to contribute jointly in finding ways to achieve national reconciliation, justice, independence, peace and reunification. Asian churches have expressed their solidarity in different ways for many years. They have been supportive of the initiative taken by the National Council of Churches in Korea (NCCK) to be involved in the process of peaceful reunification. This was an act of ecumenical fellowship and spirit.

In the past, for a number of reasons, CCA's role was more behind the scenes than in the limelight. A CCA staff member visited North Korea in September 1989. Now CCA has begun to take an active part in the peace and reunification efforts, along with its member churches and the NCCK. CCA has also taken the initiative to mobilise other Asian churches to support North Korea in its food crisis. In May 1997 the General Committee of CCA issued a statement and appealed to its member churches and councils to ex-

tend humanitarian assistance to North Korea in partnership with NCCK. The CCA chose as the theme for 1998 Asia Sunday 'North Korea: Give Them Life'. It prepared a special liturgy and posters to highlight the North Korean situation. Special prayers for Korean unification were included in the liturgy. CCA member churches and councils in sixteen Asian countries observed Asia Sunday on 15 May. Several churches and national councils collected offerings during the Sunday services and contributed the money to support the humanitarian aid programs initiated by NCCK. The International Affairs program committee of CCA has decided to give special emphasis to Korean unification programs and extend support for churches in South and North Korea in their efforts. In early 1999, CCA will send a delegation to visit North Korea to express its pastoral concern and solidarity. I mention these initiatives to indicate that CCA, a silent partner in the past, is now moving towards being an active par-

ticipant in our common ecumenical journey, sharing responsibilities and labour.

CCA, as a regional ecumenical body, believes that it should establish a new and genuine relationship with the people and the church in North Korea, a relationship of equal partnership.

CCA takes this opportunity to reaffirm its solidarity and commitment to all member churches in Korea and to NCCK for its untiring pursuit in promoting peace and reconciliation in the peninsula and for its courage, commitment and hope to achieve the goal. The Korean churches have taken the position that the overcoming of hatred and hostility is not only a political task but is also a Christian responsibility, a task of biblical and theological peace education. The Korean churches' Jubilee Declaration proclaimed the division to be the cause of structural evil, that the division was an issue of Christians' faith and that their mission of overcoming the division was the salvation from this evil. As churches in both Koreas move forward in their faith, commitment and struggle, CCA believes that the efforts initiated by the Korean churches have contributed to reduce the hostility and confrontation, and thus helped improve the situation of division and pain. It may even have influenced government policies in both North and South.

Let us pray to God for his blessings in abundance and grant us a new vision to continue this peace and reconciliation mission. Let us hope that, as the Prophet Isaiah said, 'Your people will rebuild what has long been in ruins, building again on the old foundations ...' (Isaiah 58:12)

(Mathews George Chunakara)

Indian Churches' Response to Nuclear Tests

The National Council of Churches in India, on behalf of its twenty-nine constituent member churches, expressed its concerns and sentiments on the nuclear tests carried out at Pokharan on 11 and 13 May 1998

We wish to congratulate our nuclear scientists, who have proved themselves to be no lesser than scientists of the so-called developed nations, particularly given the meagre resources at their disposal. We are very much concerned with the appropriation of the credit and the projections being indulged in by the dominant partner in the present ruling coalition. The kind of celebrations witnessed in Delhi and other cities in BJP party offices certainly are not representative of the sentiments of the people of India.

The Prime Minister's and other statements emerging from the PM's office, as also the Home Minister's statements, seem to smack of hegemonic tendencies towards our neighbouring nations. Certainly, being seen or becoming a nuclear weapons state does not in itself become a deterrent to nuclear warfare! We witnessed this amply during the Cold War. We believed that the post-Cold War period would see the destruction of nuclear stockpiling at a global level. What we are witnessing instead is the escalation of a nuclear threat in our own subcontinent. Where are the benefits of the much-touted 'peace dividend'? As a nation that has, through the ages, steadfastly stood by peace, present events are taking it in the opposite direction. As the largest nation of the subcontinent we should be promoting peaceful coexistence, with an improvement in the general living conditions of the population—not being seen as a hegemonic power.

We wish to raise some basic questions to the coalition:

- Is it that the world did not know our nuclear capabilities? Pokharan I in 1974 had visibly demonstrated this.
- Did the world not know how in the past two decades the atom has been used for peace in our great nation?
- What were the specific reasons, social, economic, political and scientific, that were so compelling as to venture into Pokharan II?
- The last seven years under the NIEP regime has created a sharp economic polarisation in our society. With the Planning Commission's admission that 320 million peo-

ple live below the poverty line, was the colossal expenditure incurred on Pokharan II justifiable?

- As our nation prepares to enter the third millennium we urge the government to take a very serious look at the state of the people. The gap between the rich and poor is ever widening. Does the government have the political will to bridge this gap through concrete programs?

There are many concerns:

- Poverty alleviation programs have had very little impact on the state of poverty, particularly for people from SC and ST backgrounds. A serious evaluation of this failure must be undertaken and correctives initiated.
- The recent trend of farmers committing suicide in many states is a matter of deep concern. The government must probe into the causes and take remedial measures.
- The state of primary education across the nation is abysmal.
- The state of health facilities to the poor and marginalised people is deplorable.
- People in our villages still do not have clean, potable drinking water.
- The state of public housing is in shambles.

We earnestly urge the government to take immediate steps aimed at the overall development of the people of India. India is not just the nation of the present-day 'haves'—a minority—but is also a nation the vast majority of which are living on the fringes of the economy and who have no stake in it. Given the bountiful resources mother nature has endowed on our motherland, we need to work towards the building up of a society that is self-reliant and sustaining. To do this we must strengthen the SAARC and SAFTA so that trade and human relations are improved in the subcontinent, leading to the general prosperity of the people of the region and the people of our nation.

The church today, as in the past, continues to play its role in the arena of people's development. We wish to assure the government that we shall continue in our endeavours towards the creation of a **just, participatory and sustainable society**. We wish to also give an assurance that the church is at the service of the people and the nation and will be ready to play its role whenever called on.

(Ipe Joseph, General Secretary, NCCI)

Blasphemy Laws in Pakistan

“ Minorities in Pakistan are caught up in a grave situation. Gory incidents are occurring on a daily basis. A wild wave of sectarianism has engulfed our society, resulting in unethical sentiments of religious prejudice. Armed religious extremists are playing havoc. A situation of religious intolerance has spread suffocation in our lives. The doors of dialogue are being closed. Religious fundamentalism has grown beyond all proportion. Muslim clerics are demanding a complete imposition of the Islamic Shariah in Pakistan and demanding it should be applied to non-Muslim citizens of the country. ”

So says Chowdhury Naeem Shakir, a prominent human rights lawyer and Christian leader in Pakistan. Mr Shakir, and Mr Victor Azariah, a CCA International Affairs Committee

member, spoke at a one-day seminar organised by the International Affairs Desk of CCA on ‘Blasphemy Laws in Pakistan and Their Impact’, held in Colombo on 29 May 1998. Bishop Kenneth Fernando, a president of CCA, presided.

Minorities in Pakistan have already suffered seriously on account of sectarian legislation, which has discriminated against non-Muslim citizens in all fields of life. The claim of minorities as equal and respectable citizens is at stake and their lives and property are no longer safe.

The Christians of Pakistan are being roped into false cases under the blasphemy law. They are being murdered by zealots, who take the law into their own hands. The law on blasphemy is being ruthlessly abused to settle personal scores and, of course, for religious persecution.

Bishop John Joseph, the Roman Catholic Bishop of Faizalabad, an ardent spokesman for peace and inter-religious dialogue, had waged a war against fundamentalism, religious intolerance and discriminatory laws—

particularly the amended provisions of law about blasphemy. In order to give impetus to the struggle and focus world attention on this crucial issue, he sacrificed his life for the cause on 5 May 1998, shooting himself in front of the iron gate of the Sessions Court of Sahiwal, which had convicted Ayub Masih on a charge of blasphemy and sentenced him to death.

Pakistan has a poor track record for protecting its minorities against social injustice. Surveys by independent agencies reveal minorities are deprived of basic civil liberties and equal opportunities in jobs, education and political representation. Quite often they are the target of harassment, violence or even murder by mobs blinded with religious frenzy. Ironically, the state, instead of safeguarding the rights of minorities, has enacted laws that are patently discriminatory.

A law on blasphemy has existed in Pakistan since 1927, but since a vague and arbitrary definition of blasphemy was inserted into the Pakistan Penal Code in the 1980s and punishment increased from two years imprisonment to the death sentence, incidents of alleged blasphemy have risen.

Several cases of blasphemy have been reported by the Pakistani media, human rights lawyers and organisations over the past few years. The latter claim that most cases of blasphemy are a result of abuse of the law by individuals and religious groups settling personal disputes or stirring up disharmony among religious groups.

(Mathews George Chunakara)



Mathews George Chunakara, Chowdhury Naeem Shakir, Bishop Kenneth Fernando and Victor Azariah at the seminar on blasphemy laws in Pakistan

Synod of Bishops' Special Assembly for Asia

Fraternal delegates from CCA invited to attend Catholic bishops' synod in the Vatican

The Synod of Bishops' Special Assembly for Asia was held in the Vatican City, 19 April–14 May 1998. It was the third in a series of regional episcopal gatherings being convened by Pope John Paul II to help the Catholic Church ready itself for the year 2000 and the new millennium. Africa and America had already met. Oceania (which in Vatican geography includes Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand) and Europe are still to come. In each of these most participants hail from the region concerned, but a significant minority—heads of Curia departments, representative superiors of religious orders, representatives of other regions—ensures each regional gathering is tied firmly to the wider church.

The Asia Synod brought together some 250 people. Bishops numbered about 175, including patriarchs of eastern-rite churches and the twenty-five heads of Curia departments. The remainder included forty auditors (priests, religious and laity, including some women and youth), eighteen experts and four ecumenical fraternal delegates.

'Asia', for the purpose of this exercise, stretched from Lebanon and Kazakhstan in the west to Japan and Siberia in the east and down to Indonesia in the south. Some Middle Easterners were unhappy about this arrangement, on the grounds that their history and traditions were quite dif-

ferent from those of most of the 'new churches' of Asia.

Among the fraternal delegates, Archimandrite Shahan Sarkissian (Lebanon) represented the Middle East Conference of Churches. The Christian Conference of Asia appointed Rev. Dr K.M. George (India), Rev. Agustina Lumentut (Indonesia), Rev. David Gill (Australia) and Bishop Kenneth Fernando (Sri Lanka), although unfortunately illness prevented Bishop Fernando's attendance. Fraternal delegates were encouraged to participate fully in the life of the Synod, excluding, of course, anything that in-

involved elections or voting. Each fraternal delegate was invited to address the gathering. Other forms of involvement included work in the small groups, many informal conversations, a luncheon hosted by the President of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity and a dinner with the Pope in his apartment. In all this we found ourselves the beneficiaries not only of impeccable protocol but of much generosity of spirit and personal warmth.

The Synod process was meticulous, participatory, protracted (nearly four weeks) and extraordinarily formal.



Fraternal delegates Shahan Sarkissian (Middle East Council of Churches), K.M. George and David Gill (CCA) at the opening mass in St Peter's Basilica, accompanied by Mgr John Radano of the Vatican's Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity

A working document (the *Instrumentum laboris*), hammered out in advance, provided the basis for discussion. Working languages were English, French, Italian and, if you were really keen, Latin.

The Pope attended nearly all the twenty-three plenary sessions. During the first nine days each participant could make one eight-minute intervention, the full text of which had to be submitted twenty-four hours in advance, together with a twenty-line summary for the media. Speeches were then scheduled regardless of how one person's concern might relate to another's, which ruled out any effective interaction between speakers. The eight-minute limit was enforced with relentless zeal and cheerful disregard for hierarchy. Any infringement and even the most eminent prelate found himself silenced, mid-sentence, by a dead microphone. Particular issues, distilled from the plenary interventions, were then discussed in small groups of fifteen to twenty, from which emerged a series of propositions. These were refined, voted on and submitted to the Pope, for his use in an eventual Apostolic Exhortation to the Church at large. The Synod also adopted its own Message.

Ecumenical bodies could learn from the care, expertise and time invested in drafting theologically coherent, pastorally oriented output.

The Synod's theme was 'Jesus Christ the Saviour and His Mission of Love and Service in Asia: "... that they may have life and have it abundantly" (John 10:10)'

Exploring this, participants found themselves drawn to a number of recurring concerns:

Evangelisation

Again and again participants referred ruefully to the minority status of the Church in all but two (Lebanon and the Philippines) of the countries represented. 'The Catholic Church has been in Asia for 2000 years but our numbers remain small. Why?' was a repeated question. With this went an almost consistent silence about Asia's colonial past and Catholicism's part in it—which some found puzzling in the year marking the arrival of Vasco da Gama in India. The bishops' yearning for more effective evangelisation was clear. However, the readiness of some to emulate uncritically what Protestants do in the name of evangelism caused us some concern, as did their seeming assumption that fidelity properly translates into increased numerical strength.

Enculturation

The Message hints only briefly at the many calls that were heard for more freedom for bishops and national episcopal conferences, so that the faith might be earthed more effectively in particular cultures and languages. Japanese, Korean, Indonesian and Philippines bishops led the charge. Centralisers responded with reminders that the Church is one and must act accordingly. As non-Catholics we were fascinated to observe the way deep respect for the Petrine office and intense irritation with aspects of the associated bureaucracy seem so easily to coexist.

Relations with Other Faiths

Synod fathers struggled impressively to affirm both the distinctive claims of the Christian faith and the positive ele-

ments to be found in other religions. Islam preoccupied the meeting. Confronted by situations as diverse as Iraq and Indonesia, shocked by news of the suicide of a Pakistani bishop protesting his country's blasphemy laws, participants were painfully aware of just how complex interfaith relations can be.

China

Two seats in the Synod, prominently labelled for bishops from the People's Republic of China, remained vacant throughout. The would-be participants had been prevented from travelling. There was much heart-searching over relations between the 'Unofficial Church' and the 'Official Church' in China, some of it rather apocalyptic in tone but some of it more subtle, nuanced and positive.

Inter-rite Tensions

Several countries, notably India and Kuwait, provided evidence of serious difficulties in relationships between Latin-rite and Eastern-rite jurisdictions, where two or more bishops find themselves with overlapping spheres of responsibility. Some Oriental Catholic representatives stressed an ecclesiology that sees the Catholic Church as a communion of diverse particular churches and called for more autonomy on matters like the selection of bishops, revival of married clergy and extensions of mission territories.

Ecumenism

Ecumenism cannot, alas, be listed as one of the Synod's major concerns. True, a strong plea for Christian unity came from Cardinal Edward Cassidy, President of the Pontifical Council for

Promoting Christian Unity. Archbishop Armande Trindade (Pakistan) urged Catholic membership of NCCs and of the CCA—or of possible successor bodies. Bishop Kunnacherry (India) called for increased eucharistic hospitality. Certainly there was no overt hostility to ecumenism and, as noted, the four fraternal delegates were received courteously and heard sympathetically. Quite simply, such interest as the Synod had for tackling relations with other Christians was far exceeded by its interest in improving relations with other faiths and within the Roman Catholic Church itself. Language did not help: notwithstanding the subtleties of Vatican II and *Ut Unum Sint*, the Synod tossed around terms like ‘the church in Asia’, ‘a rich variety of churches’, ‘all the particular churches of Asia’, ‘sister churches’ and even ‘the people of God’, meaning in each case those in full communion with the See of Rome.

There is reason to expect, nevertheless, that the Synod may give some impetus to interest in Catholic membership of ecumenical structures in Asia. CCA and its related NCCs would do well to consider how they should respond to any approaches that may be forthcoming.

A Final Comment

We were impressed by the quality of the Catholic leadership here represented. Theologically, pastorally, they are an outstanding group of people. To have been associated with them in a common endeavour through those weeks was a high privilege indeed.

(K.M. George,
Agustina Lumentut,
David Gill)

Fraternal Delegates' Interventions at Synod of Bishops

Intervention of Rev. Agustina Lumentut, Central Sulawesi, Christian Church of Indonesia

Greetings in the love of Christ,
We of the delegation of the Christian Conference of Asia (CCA) join with you, our brothers and sisters, in offering praise to the Lord who is leading the journey of the Roman Catholic Church in Asia together with us—your fellow Christians. From the depth of our hearts we express our thanks and our highest regards to Pope John Paul II by whose invitation we of the Christian Conference of Asia are present at this important Synod. The Christian Conference of Asia considers this invitation as a very progressive, meaningful and valuable step in the process of restoring the unity of the church, not only in Asia but hopefully in the whole world. May Pope John Paul II be blessed by God in his leadership of the worldwide Roman Catholic communion. And may all the bishops of this Synod be blessed by the Lord in this assembly as they wrestle with the Christian call on the approach of the year 2000.

I am blessed in a special way by the trust the Christian Conference of Asia has given to me in this Synod, and moreover, in being given the opportunity to both extend our greetings as well as offer a contribution to the deliberations on the Synod theme. Certainly this means a golden opportunity for me to be here among you as a woman. A theologian belonging to the

Protestant churches of Indonesia, who started as an ordained pastor in a parish in my region, Central Sulawesi, who became a member of the Central Committee of the World Council of Churches in Geneva, was Vice-General Secretary of the Council of Indonesian Churches and for eight years, till last year, President (or should I say bishop) of the church of Central Sulawesi. Now I am a village pastor again.

In studying the *Instrumentum laboris* I was impressed while discovering that the Roman Catholic Church is determined that renewal and revitalisation be effectuated throughout the church as it carries on the mission of Jesus Christ in Asia, the mission of love and service. This is brought very clearly to the fore in point 5 of the Introduction, under the title ‘The Synodal Pilgrimage’. I quote:

‘The church in Asia is presently involved in a Synodal journey, a journey which is hoped will lead to internal renewal and revitalisation of the commitment to proclaim the saving message of Jesus Christ through a new evangelisation.

‘In keeping with the etymological meaning of the word *syn-odos* “a walking together”, this synodal journey is done in the company of Jesus Christ, in communion with all the particular churches of Asia and with the worldwide Church, and in the spirit of unity not only with the Christian churches and communities in Asia, but also with the followers of the great

religions and religious traditions of Asia.'

At the time of this Synod meeting, on the one hand violent conflicts are breaking out at different places of the world, on the other hand people are seeking reconciliation. In Asia many countries are afflicted by a monetary and economic crisis. Therefore poverty and suffering increase for men, but in particular for women, who will be hit most by the rising prices of their basic needs. Often the husbands and the older children of Asian women have gone away to the big cities to find a job—and never return. No *syn-odos*, no 'walking together' any more for many Asian women and their families. But there is a *syn-odos*, a 'walking together' with women from the same religion, and also from other religions, women who have similar experiences. As Asian women theologians have stated, 'These shared experiences can become one of the primary sources for theological reflection', for re-reading the scripture, for a new interpretation, a new perspective. As long as Asian women find the courage to tell each other their stories and share their experiences, they have hope. Women are walking together. But is the church walking with them?

If we understand renewal as that which determines the path of the Roman Catholic Church from now until the year 2000 and thereafter, what form of renewal is to be expected? Whose voice is being heard and considered? Certainly the voice of Jesus Christ. Certainly also the voice of the Holy Spirit. Also the voice of the poor, of the oppressed, the voice of people who experience discrimination whether because of the colour of their

skin, their social status, or their gender. All of these are recorded and noted (Chapter 111/22). A question that arises in my heart is, will the voice of women be considered among those already mentioned? The issue about women in point 22 does speak about what is done for them in order that they achieve equal status in society. But equal status with whom? With men? And then—what about equal status within the church?

The *Instrumentum laboris* states: '[Through] the entry of religious sisters into the Asian missionary scene, the process of social emancipation of women gained a fresh momentum.'

If I understand correctly, this must be read alongside chapter 111/44. While positive in many respects, that chapter seems to assume that the proper role of women in the church is among the laity. Of course, lay women do make a vital contribution to the church's life and witness. But I cannot hide the deep conviction of my

church: first, that among women, also, are found the gifts and graces of those who may appropriately be ordained to pastoral and sacramental ministry, and second, that the church must order its life to be able to receive such gifts and graces. On this issue our churches remain divided, as indeed do the churches that belong to the CCA. But as an ordained pastor, as a bishop, I hope that we will make it a subject for serious dialogue so that, together, we may find our way to a shared understanding of God's will for the Church.

May the voice of Christ guide your deliberations and decisions.

Intervention of Fr K.M. George, India

Your Holiness, Fathers, Brothers and Sisters,
Let me first of all express my profound gratitude to His Holiness the Pope on behalf of the member churches of the Christian Conference of Asia and my



David Gill and Agustina Lumentut with Fr Tim Galligan of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity

own church, the Malankara Orthodox Church in India for the kind invitation to us to participate in this historic Synod of Bishops.

His Holiness has reminded us that 'Christ was born on Asian soil'. This should make us Asian Christians deeply humble and grateful to God as we look forward to the mission of Christ's love and service in our continent.

As a fraternal delegate let me make a few remarks on the basis of the *Instrumentum laboris*:

The paradigm of pilgrimage (*Instrumentum laboris* pp 6–7), underscoring this Synod goes deep into Asian religious consciousness. Pilgrimages to the sources of light and life, in all the major religions of Asia, have always been marked by total simplicity of life, by non-acquisitive and non-violent methods. Mission of Christ as peace-generating pilgrimage sets it apart from all kinds of expeditions for political-economic profit or cultural domination.

We are meeting in the historic year of the 500th anniversary of the arrival of Vasco da Gama on Asian soil, at Calicut on the Malabar coast in 1498. In the light of what happened to Asian countries since then, we need to re-discover the self-emptying dimension of pilgrimage so rooted in Asian psyche and spirituality. A purification of Asian space from neo-colonial conquest and cultural domination is a precondition for mission.

The peoples of Asia, in their fascinating cultural diversity, have always ordered and celebrated historical time by devising calendrical systems in harmony with the rhythm of nature and the pulses of cosmic life. They would

certainly rejoice at the flow of life and light into the world, signalled by the star of the East at the birth of Jesus, 'the true light that enlightens every human being' (John 1:9). In our pilgrim's walk together (*syn-odos*) with our neighbours in Asia, we need to be understanding if they have difficulty to celebrate the jubilee of the birth of Christ according to calendars that do not harmonise with their rhythm of life and sense of time. A re-ordering of time, left to the Asians themselves, is a must for mission.

The new self-consciousness brewing in the ancient religions of Asia will no longer passively accept any missionary strategy, however sophisticated. The remedy lies, far beyond the unilateral concepts of dialogue and enculturation, in the simplicity and unassuming genuineness of living the Gospel without any hidden agenda. The institutional power, perhaps inadvertently built around admirable Christian initiatives of love and charity, will eventually lead to rivalry and conflict with other religions in Asia.

Christian unity, the most urgent priority for us in the new millennium, requires openness to more than one model. Several ancient local churches in Asia and Africa, small in number and insignificant in material power, struggle to remain faithful to the Apostolic tradition of the undivided church in hostile political and cultural situations. For these churches, eucharistic communion with the apostolic churches of Christ everywhere in the world is the norm of communion at all levels of life. Their ecumenical vision is inspired by the goal of visible communion in love and in one faith in Christ. Since there is no consensus yet

between the different families of churches on the criteria of communion and authority in the church, we need to address this issue in the broad context of Christian tradition and the identity of peoples.

In this connection, I wish to mention the admirable work of the Pontifical Council for Christian Unity in coordinating the vital dialogue between the Roman Catholic Church and the ancient Orthodox churches of the east. Most Asian Orthodox and Protestant churches are in the fellowship of the World Council of Churches at the global level. This fellowship constantly challenges them to seek ever wider and deeper communion in Christ in the visible unity of his body.

If the second millennium brought division to historic churches that were one and united (like, for example, the pre-Portuguese apostolic church in India) through colonial and un-ecclesial measures, let us hope that our common pilgrimage in Asia in the new millennium, guided by the Holy Spirit, would heal our bitter memories and wounds in the Body of Christ and restore the church's integrity for the glory of God and the welfare of humanity.

Intervention by the Rev. David Gill, General Secretary of the National Council of Churches in Australia

Holy Father, Brothers and Sisters in Christ,
I join my colleague, Fr K.M. George of India, in bringing you the greetings of the Christian Conference of Asia (CCA). We apologise for the absence of Bishop Kenneth Fernando of Sri

Lanka, who has been prevented by illness from taking his place as leader of the CCA's team of fraternal delegates. We look forward to the arrival next week of another CCA representative, the Revd Agustina Lumentut of Indonesia.

The Christian Conference of Asia is a regional ecumenical organisation formed some forty years ago. It gathers together churches and national councils of churches in seventeen countries extending from Pakistan in the west to Japan in the east, down to Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand in the south. Its membership embraces nearly 120 Protestant, Orthodox and Anglican churches. No Catholic episcopal conference has sought membership—yet! In that respect, we in Asia lag behind the Pacific, the Caribbean and the Middle East. However, several bishops conferences do participate indirectly through their membership of national councils of churches that themselves belong to the CCA.

Synod Fathers will be pleased, I hope, that the past few years have seen a significant increase in cooperation between the CCA and the FABC. The two bodies, jointly, have established what they call the Asia Ecumenical Committee, several members of which are participating in this Synod. Already that Asia Ecumenical Committee is helping to improve mutual understanding between our churches, and it is developing plans for some joint programs. The hope is that this initiative, increasingly, will find an echo in closer relationships between our churches—nationally, and indeed at diocesan and parish levels as well.

May I convey, also, the greetings of my own National Council of Churches

in Australia. Reconstituted four years ago, this fellowship includes not only Protestant churches, the Anglican Church and a large group of Orthodox churches, but now the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference as well. This makes ours one of the few national councils of churches in the Asia region in which the Catholic Church is a full member. The Council's member churches, according to our Basis, have committed themselves:

- '(i) to deepen their relationship with each other in order to express more visibly the unity willed by Christ for his Church, and
- '(ii) to work together towards the fulfilment of their mission of common witness, proclamation and service, to the glory of the one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.'

Our pilgrimage together has only begun, but already the experience is proving positive—indeed, exhilarating!—for all concerned.

Friends, the issues we are addressing in this Synod are not just Catholic issues. They are issues that confront all the churches of Asia today. The nuances may vary a little from church to church, from country to country. But the underlying questions of faith and faithfulness are questions to which all our churches, in one way or another, must address themselves. We can thank God that in our generation the churches have so many possibilities for tackling such vital questions together, so many opportunities for witnessing together to the great and glorious mystery of the gospel.

Are our churches using such ecumenical opportunities as they should?

I think not. True, there are serious doctrinal differences that have yet to be resolved. But we must not allow such remaining differences to serve as an excuse for failing to do all we can, now, to give expression to the real, if imperfect, communion that already exists within the family of the Christian faith. True, the directives of our respective church authorities do impose certain restraints on how our still-divided churches may relate to each other. But we must not permit such restraints to blind us to the many possibilities that exist, often unrecognised, for fresh initiatives to give expression to the unity we have in Christ. When the *Instrumentum laboris* says, regarding ecumenism, 'the reality remains that much work needs to be done in this area', it is surely speaking the truth.

It would be impertinent for me as a fraternal delegate to suggest what Synod Fathers should think or say. But I cannot help but hope you will do all in your power to encourage your people to recognise, indeed to strengthen, the ties they have with those of us in other churches who with you are baptised into Christ, who with you are nourished by the bread and wine of his presence, who with you pray for the coming of his kingdom, who with you strive to be part of his mission of love and service in Asia today.

I thank the Synod for the gracious way you have received me—not only as a fraternal delegate but, better, as a friend and as a brother in Christ. May your deliberations be blessed. And may we all find our way, soon, to becoming one family of faith gathered around the one cross of the world's one redeemer.

Youth Development Training in Vietnam



Participants of the Vietnam youth development training course visiting a handicraft project

Twenty-five youth development leaders and managers from Vietnam participated in an HRD course for Youth Development, held in Hanoi 30 March–3 April 1998. The program was part of an ongoing three-year project of the CCA and the UN/ESCAP, with assistance from EZE of Germany.

The five-day training course was aimed at equipping participants with development perspectives on the role of youth in development, with project management as an entry point. Thus the program included some discussion on the situation of youth in the Asia-Pacific region and in Vietnam. Thereafter, the participants were given inputs on project management skills and knowledge—from community-needs assessment on to project planning, implementation and monitoring and evaluation, with special emphasis on the role of youth in development.

One innovation of the training program was its adoption of adult learning principles and techniques. This training methodology, while touching on substantive aspects, made use of highly participatory, self-discovery-oriented approaches, including management games, individual learning exercises, panel discussions, small group discussions, and a field visit to an actual community.

Most of the materials were translated into Vietnamese, in advance or during the training course itself, to provide participants with reference sources after the training. As an output of the course, participants were asked to prepare project proposals that they could work on back home. These were presented to the large group and critiqued by fellow participants and the resource persons.

This training program in Vietnam was the second one to be held within

the first six months of 1998, the first one being held in Saravahn, Lao PDR, in March this year. Dr Prawate Khidarn, CCA Executive Secretary for Development and Service, was one of the resource persons in the Lao training program.

The timing of the Vietnam training program was immediately following a Roundtable Meeting of Experts on Formulation of Youth Policy, held in Hanoi, involving Vietnam, the Philippines and Malaysia. The roundtable meeting was held 17–28 March and included eleven key officials of Vietnam involved in the drafting of the country's youth policy. Representatives came from the Vietnam Youth Federation, the Ministry of Education and Training, the Youth Research Centre and the Youth Training College. Areas of discussion included definition of youth and youth-related issues, formation of youth policy and mechanisms for youth policy implementation.

(Emmanuel N. Ilagan)

UCC Philippines Celebrates Golden Jubilee

The United Church of Christ in the Philippines (UCCP) celebrated its golden jubilee in May amidst celebrations for the centennial of Protestantism in the Philippines.

The UCCP was born in 1948 out of a union of the Presbyterian Churches, the Congregational Churches, the Disciples of Christ, the Evangelical United Brethren and a portion of the Methodist Church. →

As part of the celebrations two major artistic presentations were held in the Folk Arts Theatre in Manila on the evenings of 23 and 24 May.

'Come Let's Celebrate' was an indigenous dance and music presentation featuring the Kariala Dance and Gong Ensemble, focusing on celebrating and reclaiming the dynamic heritage of UCCP.

The other, 'Christianity Yesterday and Today', was a musical dance-drama highlighting the centennial of Protestantism and the first fifty years of UCCP, with the cultural group Busilak from the Institute of Religion and Culture in Bukidnon.

The peak of the celebrations was a golden jubilee sunrise service, held in Manila on 24 May, with keynote speaker, Dr Jovita R. Salonga, a former Senate President who himself is a member of UCCP.

The celebration continued with the General Assembly, the first held under the new constitution of UCCP. This was held on 24–29 May 1998 in the historic UCCP Ellinwood Malate, Manila. The theme of the assembly was 'Reclaiming Our Dynamic Heritage, Renewing Our Commitment to Mission and Unity'.

The Assembly elected new leadership for the ensuing quadrennium: Rev. Dr Everett Mendoza (Chairperson), Rev. Elmer T. Paniamogan (Vice Chairperson), Bishop Elmer M. Bolocon (General Secretary), Rev. Raymundo P. Gelloagan (National Treasurer) and Rev. Eelre B. Limpahan (National Auditor).

The General Assembly also made history by electing Rev. Nelinda Primavera-Briones as the first woman bishop of UCCP.

Bishop Primavera-Briones will serve the South Luzon Jurisdiction.

UCCP has divided Mindanao into two jurisdictions so that the church starts the new quadrennium with five bishops.

The other four bishops are Rev. Alan B. Sarte (North Luzon), Rev. Rizalino Q. Taganas (Visayas), Rev. Osias B. Jaim (Northwest Mindanao), and Rev. Anacleto G. Serafica (South-east Mindanao).

(Feliciano V. Cariño
and Henriette Hutabarat)

Second Asia-Pacific Intergovernmental Meeting

The second Asia-Pacific Intergovernmental Meeting on Human Resources Development for Youth was conducted by the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and Pacific (ESCAP) in Bangkok 1–5 June 1998. The meeting was convened as a preparatory activity for the World Congress of Ministers Responsible for Youth to be held in Lisbon, 8–12 August 1998.

Dr Feliciano V. Cariño, General Secretary, and Dr Prawate Khid-arn, Executive Secretary for Development and Service, represented CCA at the meeting.

In an opening statement, Dr Cariño emphasised the significance of youth and need for cooperation between government agencies, non-governmental organisations, spiritual leaders and people's organisations. He said, 'Human resource development, espe-

cially of youth, should be considered by all as most crucial. The Christian Conference of Asia is glad to be part of the effort that ESCAP is exerting in this field.'

A special panel discussed 'Child Sexual Abuse and Exploitation: Challenges of Prevention and Protection from Victimisation'. The meeting noted that child rape, incest, child prostitution, child pornography and the trafficking of children for sexual purposes were prevalent in the ESCAP region. It also considered issues related to the physical and psycho-social recovery and social reintegration of victims.

Discussion focused on the youth policy experiences of member countries in the ESCAP region. The meeting stressed that youth policies needed to be of an intersectoral nature, required political commitment and formal linkages to national action plans, and demanded the active participation of youth in all phases of formulation, implementation and evaluation.

Other three key areas for regional cooperation on youth were discussed—education, employment and health.

A program of cooperation between the church—the World Council of Churches (WCC)—and the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and Pacific (UN/ESCAP) was first begun in 1979 with the Training of Trainers in Youth Works Program. Since 1989 the program has been undertaken by the Christian Conference of Asia (CCA). Three CCA Consultants to ESCAP have been appointed, including Dr Eli Mapanao (1990–1993), Lawrence Surendra (1994–1996) and Emmanuel N. Ilagan at present.

(Prawate Khid-arn)

The Religious Situation

Problems, Perspectives and Challenges for the Ecumenical Movement

An ecumenical study project, 'The Religious Situation: Problems, Perspectives and Challenges for the Ecumenical Movement' was launched at the Ecumenical Institute in Bossey, Celigny, Switzerland, on 25–31 May 1998. Convened by the World Council of Churches (WCC) through the Ecumenical Institute, the study project gathered an outstanding group of scholars and academic and ecumenical practitioners to reflect on and suggest areas for ecumenical study and action into the twenty-first century. The study project looked at various aspects of the present religious situation, and the various ways in which religion and the religious life intersect and influence various other aspects of individual and collective life, and of the life of church, society and the international community.

It was the intention of the study project not only to contribute to the understanding of churches concerning the religious situation, and 'putting questions which are relevant to the present situation', but also to explore and use a fresh language of discourse and analysis that does not fall into the 'reductionism of the majority language' of current discussion.

Noting that the energising of the tradition of ecumenical study that has been a major part of ecumenical life from its beginnings is important in giving shape to ecumenical life in the coming century, the launching event of the study project drew selected partici-

pants from various parts of the world and set up an agenda of research and study that will be undertaken by the group during the next few years.

Initial papers presented dealt with such subjects as:

- Hinduism at the Crossroads—Wesley Ariarajah (formerly with WCC and now at Drew University)
- Islam in America—Jane Smith (Hartford)
- Prevailing Trends in Judaism—Hans Ucko (WCC)
- The Present Religious Situation: An Anthropological Contribution—Andre Droogers (Amsterdam)
- Contemporary Religious Expression of Fundamentalism in Brazil and Its Effects on Women—Maria Jose F. Rosado Nunez (Sao Paulo)
- Secularisation in Europe: The Exception That Proves the Rule?—Grace Davie (Exeter)
- Trends in Islam Today—Tarik Mitri (WCC)
- Some Items in a Possible Agenda of Study and Research on the Religious Situation from Southeast Asia—Feliciano V. Cariño (CCA)

The agenda of research and study that was drawn up by the launching meeting included such issues as:

- religion and contemporary political life
- religion, culture and economics
- religions and plurality
- religions and the quality of life.

Subareas will include such contentious issues as:

- fundamentalism in contemporary religious life
- syncretism and inter-religious dialogue
- the impact of secularisation
- globalisation and ecumenism.

In addition to those who have already participated in the launching session, the study group will invite the participation of others whose experience and expertise could add to the depth and breadth of the study. Included in the list of those who will be invited are:

- Kim Yong Bok (Korea)
- Philip K. Mbaya (Democratic Republic of Congo)
- Heinrich Shaeffer (Costa Rica)
- Diane Eck (USA)
- Agnes Aboum (Kenya)
- Mercy Oduyoye (Ghana)
- Ninan Koshy (India).

The General Secretary of CCA has been invited as a full participant in the study project.

Dr Julio de Santa Ana, who is a Study Consultant at the Ecumenical Institute in Bossey, is coordinating the project.

(Feliciano V. Cariño)



This year, the World Council of Churches celebrates the fiftieth anniversary of its founding in Amsterdam in 1948.

The Executive Committee of the WCC has invited churches around the world to join in the following prayer to commit the work of the WCC to God.

(Text as approved by the Executive Committee, February 1998)

Our Ecumenical Vision

Jesus Christ, who has called us to be one, is in our midst!
As Christians from every part of the world, we give thanks
that the triune God has drawn our churches closer together
in faith and life, witness and service.

We celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of the World Council of Churches—
'a fellowship of churches which confess the Lord Jesus Christ as God and Saviour
according to the scriptures
and therefore seek to fulfil together their common calling
to the glory of the one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit'.

Receiving the legacy of those who have gone before us:

We are drawn by the vision of a church
that will bring all people into communion with God and with one another,
professing one baptism,
celebrating one holy communion,
and acknowledging a common ministry.

We are drawn by the vision of a church
which will express its unity by confessing the apostolic faith,
living in conciliar fellowship,
acting together in mutual accountability.

We are challenged by the vision of a church
that will reach out to everyone,
sharing,
caring,
proclaiming the good news of God's redemption,
a sign of the kingdom and a servant of the world.

We are challenged by the vision of a church,
the people of God on the way together,
confronting all divisions of race, gender, age or culture,
striving to realise justice and peace,
upholding the integrity of creation.

*Affirming anew that our task is to embody, here and now,
the vision of what God's people are called to be:*

We journey together as a people freed by God's forgiveness.
In the midst of the brokenness of the world,
we proclaim the good news of reconciliation, healing and justice in Christ.

We journey together as a people with resurrection faith.
 In the midst of exclusion and despair,
 we embrace, in joy and hope, the promise of life in all its fullness.

We journey together as a people of prayer.
 In the midst of confusion and loss of identity,
 we discern signs of God's purpose being fulfilled
 and expect the coming of God's reign.

Therefore, this is our vision for the ecumenical movement:

We long for the visible oneness of the body of Christ,
 affirming the gifts of all,
 young and old, women and men, lay and ordained.

We expect the healing of human community,
 the wholeness of God's entire creation.

We trust in the liberating power of forgiveness,
 transforming enmity into friendship
 and breaking the spiral of violence.

We open ourselves for a culture of dialogue and solidarity,
 sharing life with strangers
 and seeking encounter with those of other faiths.

This is our commitment:

We intend to stay together and are restless to grow together in unity.

We respond to the prayer of Jesus Christ
 that all may be one in order that the world may believe (John 17:21).
 We are sustained by the assurance
 that in God's purpose all things shall be united in Christ—
 things in heaven and things on earth (Ephesians 1:10).

We affirm that what unites us is stronger than what separates us.

Neither failures nor uncertainties
 neither fears nor threats
 will weaken our intention to continue to walk together on the way to unity,
 welcoming those who would join us on this journey,
 widening our common vision
 discovering new ways of witnessing and acting together in faith.

*We recommit ourselves in this fiftieth anniversary year to strengthen the World Council of Churches
 as a truly ecumenical fellowship,
 fulfilling the purposes for which it was founded
 to the glory of the triune God.*

Prayer

God of unity, God of love,
 what we say with our lips, make strong in our hearts,
 what we affirm with our minds, make vivid in our lives.
 Send us your Spirit
 to pray in us what we dare not pray,
 to claim us beyond our own claims,
 to bind us when we are tempted to go our own ways.
 Lead us forward.
 Lead us together.
 Lead us to do your will,
 the will of Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

Ecumenical Forum Called

The World Council of Churches (WCC) has issued invitations to a discussion about the possibility and desirability of organising a 'Forum of Christian Churches and Ecumenical Organisations'. The meeting will be held at the Ecumenical Institute in Bossey, Celigny, Switzerland, on 26–29 August 1998.

The idea of such an ecumenical forum is not new. In the various stages of discussion leading to the formulation of the policy paper on a 'Common Understanding and Vision of the World Council of Churches', the idea of such a forum emerged at various points as a way of recognising and enabling a wider and more inclusive and comprehensive ecumenical fellowship related to but not identical to the constituencies of existing ecumenical bodies and organisations. The forum is conceived to include ecumenical organisations other than the WCC, Christian world communions, churches not now holding membership in the WCC, and international Christian organisations of various kinds. The forum, in short, could be a 'new moment in the ecumenical movement in which could participate all churches and organisations that are committed to Christian unity and want to give a common witness to it'. From its inception, the idea of the forum has made special reference to the participation of the Roman Catholic Church and of Evangelical and Pentecostal bodies who are partners in the one ecumenical movement. It is perceived that at this time of 'ecumenical transition', where structure, con-

stituency, and the whole basis of ecumenical life is under review and discussion, a consultation on this idea is most propitious and important, not only for the WCC but also for the participating organisations and the whole ecumenical movement.

The group that is being invited to reflect more deeply about this possibility includes representatives of some Christian world communions, regional ecumenical organisations, national councils of churches, international

ecumenical organisations and of the WCC. The goal of this first consultation is to 'explore whether a proposal of the forum could be elaborated that would enable the different partners in the ecumenical movement to consider whether to envisage the organisation of such a forum'.

The Christian Conference of Asia, through its General Secretary, is among the regional ecumenical organisations that have been invited to the consultation. (Feliciano V. Cariño)

New Books from CCA

Climate Change: A Challenge to Sustainable Development in Asia

A compilation of papers presented to the Inter-Religious Consultation on Climate Change held in Kyoto, Japan, in December 1997. CCA was one of the sponsoring bodies.



RECONCILIATION REUNIFICATION

*The Ecumenical Approach to
Korean Peninsula
Based on Historical Documents*

Park Kyung Seo

Reconciliation, Reunification by Park Kyung Seo

The ecumenical approach to the Korean Peninsula based on historical documents.

Both these books are available from CCA. The price for each is \$US10.

CCA Team Visits Asian Migrant Workers in the Gulf

In cooperation with the Middle East Council of Churches, three CCA delegates—Dr Prawate Khid-Arn, Rev. Rex Reyes (Philippines), and Fr Thomas Michel (FABC)—participated in a study tour of the situation of Asian migrant workers in the Arabian/Persian Gulf, 21–31 May 1998. The team visited churches, church-related organisations, groups, lawyers concerned with legal issues related to migrants and individual workers who had been badly victimised in Kuwait and Dubai, Sharjah and Fujaira in the United Arab Emir-

ates. The delegations also visited Philippine and Indian embassies and a safe house where migrant women in crisis can remain until repatriation or a resolution of their problems. It is impossible in this brief report to do justice to the wealth of information and the number of situations, insights and viewpoints presented during the tour. Below are some of the more important issues and questions raised. (Note that in order to respect the anonymity of those who spoke with the delegation this report presents views without citing sources.)

Diversity in the Gulf Region

Asian migrants in the Gulf encounter a variety of Arab societies, each with its own legal system, population mix and attitude towards migrants. The team observed differences between Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates, as well as the diversity that exists in the seven emirates that make up the UAE. From people they met in the Gulf, they also learned of the characteristics of Oman, Bahrain, Qatar, and Saudi Arabia.

One of the most noticeable differences is in the level of religious freedom for Christian migrants. Oman, Bahrain and Dubai provide the greatest degree of religious liberty, limited only by a prohibition against proselytising Muslims. Kuwait and some Emirates, such as Abu Dhabi, Sharjah, and Fujaira, offer facilities for public worship by Christians, Qatar permits a limited possibility of worship, and Saudi Arabia does not permit any public expression of Christian faith.

Kuwait and Bahrain have small communities of local Christians who affirm that they do not suffer discrimination.

The Kuwait ambassador to Japan is a Christian, an example of the high positions local Christians can attain. In the Emirates, Oman, Qatar and Saudi Arabia the Christian churches are almost entirely composed of foreigners—Arab, Asian and European. Of these, Christians from Arab countries—Egypt, Lebanon, Palestine, etc.—are the most easily able to achieve cultural assimilation. However the most numerous groups of migrants are from Asia—mainly from India, the



Catholic church in Kuwait

Philippines, Sri Lanka and Pakistan, with smaller groups from other countries.

The Problems of Asian Migrants

Asian migrants in the Gulf have material and spiritual problems. These arise both from injustice and discrimination on the part of local employers and from problems brought on by the migrants themselves. Those with whom the team spoke stressed that one must not think that the migrants have had only negative experiences. Many migrants have done quite well in the Gulf. They have built successful careers, supported their families back home, brought families to join them in the Gulf, educated their children, built homes and attained a level of prosperity that would have been difficult in their native lands. Many migrants informed us that they were respected by employers, were paid wages on time and were able to save and send money regularly to their families.

Naturally, much attention was given to those whose experience in the Gulf has not been positive. The problems of Asian migrants often begin in their home countries, where recruiting agencies promise job offers and salaries that do not materialise. Examples were given of women recruited as nurses who, on arrival in the Gulf, were given work as domestics, and of 'double contracts' in which the migrant signs a contract promising a certain salary and working conditions, but upon arrival is presented with a second contract, often written in Arabic, with other, worse conditions.

The insecurity of migrant workers is compounded by the illegal but widespread practice of employers and

agencies retaining the workers' passports during their stay. This deprives workers of freedom of movement and prevents them from escaping from abusive situations. In the case of bankruptcies or summary dismissals, migrants can find themselves stranded. Migrants need a sponsor to work in the Gulf, which leads to such abuses as migrants' having to pay excessive sums to fictitious 'employers' who profit from the sale of sponsorships.

Domestic workers are more vulnerable than other migrant workers because they do not come under national labour laws. Considered 'part of the family', domestic workers have no recourse in the face of mistreatment. Sometimes they are sexually abused by the men of the family, beaten by the women, locked in the house when the family leaves or unpaid for months. However, it should be noted that 80 per cent of migrant workers are men, a reminder that attention should not be focused solely on the situation of domestic maids. The working and living conditions of male workers are often worse than those of women, and those responsible are often subcontractors, frequently Christian, from India or Egypt.

In disputes between migrants and employers, the police and courts usually take the side of local residents. Migrants are arrested on unsupported accusations and considered 'guilty until proven innocent'. When workers suffer physical or sexual abuse, they are deterred from reporting the abuse to the police, in fear that authorities will take the employers' word against theirs.

There seems to be a pattern in the treatment of workers. The lower a

worker is placed on social, economic or educational scales, the more likely it is that the worker will meet injustice and mistreatment. In Kuwait, female sweepers from India complained that their employers were months late in paying salaries. As the poorest and lowest paid of migrants, these women have no funds or savings even to buy food to avoid starvation.

Salaries and living conditions seem generally superior in the Emirates to those in Kuwait. The delegation did not meet any migrants in Fujaira or Dubai who complained of living conditions, and Dubai's drydocks workers were housed in quite respectable apartments with air-conditioning, swimming pools, tennis courts and mess halls with national foods. The worst living conditions encountered by the delegation were found in Kuwait, with eight workers crammed into a small room without air-conditioning. Church workers in Dubai, however, suggested that the CCA delegation did not encounter the worst living and working situations in the Emirates, which would sometimes be little better than those in Kuwait.

The attitude of embassies and consulates towards the migrant workers also varies greatly. In general, the Philippine embassies in Kuwait and the Emirates seem to take a more active concern for their migrants. It is significant that embassy officials admit that they are acting on instructions from Manila and that popular agitation in the Philippines has been an important factor in determining this policy. The Philippine consulate in Dubai, in addition to a safe house for women migrants, also conducts free-time programs in computers, language, dance

etc. for workers. Most migrants felt that the activist policy of the Philippine embassies has helped Filipino workers to obtain better treatment, but some felt that embassy concern for the workers is not a deep commitment. 'It is all talk,' said one. The Indian and Sri Lankan embassies manage safe houses for women, but the delegation heard few accounts of efforts on the part of those embassies to defend workers' rights.

Recommendations

Recommendations to Asian Churches

- The churches in Asia should take a more active role in informing prospective workers about the conditions, problems and dangers of working in the Gulf. Many workers naively think that working in the Gulf will bring assured prosperity. They are often deceived in their home countries and deceived again in the Gulf. Well-prepared information campaigns—talks, leaflets etc.—can better prepare workers for the often grim realities.
- The churches in Asia can help mobilise popular support to encourage governments to take a more active approach to defend the rights of workers. With all its limitations, the policy of the Philippines embassies in response to national demand seems relatively successful in responding to the needs of migrants. In seeking to build national awareness and concern for migrant workers, the churches should coordinate their efforts with other NGOs and human rights groups at national and regional levels.
- The churches in Asia should urge their governments to defend the

basic rights of migrants, such as the right to retain their passports, the right to legal aid in controverted cases and the right to repatriation when migrants are stranded without work.

- The churches in Asia should not regard the migrant communities in the Gulf as, in the words of one pastor, 'a cow to be milked'. The delegation encountered complaints of lengthy visits by Asian clergy and hierarchy to seek funding for projects in the home country. It was noted that Asian migrants often receive a steady stream of requests for aid from their home churches.

Recommendations to Churches in the Gulf

- Wherever possible, dialogue with local Arabs and Muslims should be undertaken with a view towards facilitating administrative procedures, e.g. importing religious goods, getting permission for building and maintaining churches and towards protecting the rights of migrants. The establishment of formal or informal legal aid societies, ideally with the involvement of local Arab lawyers, would seem a good step in the direction of defending the rights and dignity of migrants.
- The Bahrain-based Ecumenical Conference of Charity, a lay-led ecumenical association that serves the poor and oppressed, can be a valuable instrument of the churches' active concern and should be promoted throughout the Gulf. Perhaps an MECC-sponsored seminar held in Bahrain might eventually inspire similar associations among Christians in other Gulf countries.

- The need for greater pastoral care for Filipino migrants in the Vicariate of Arabia was often expressed. Indian Christians seem to be adequately served, but finding more Filipino clergy for Filipino migrants would seem to be a priority.
- There is a need for closer relationships and mutual cooperation between local Arab churches and migrants' congregations. In Kuwait, NECK could lead this significant ministry.

Recommendations to MECC and CCA

- MECC, CCA (and FABC) should appoint liaison persons to maintain regular contact, i.e. a CCA–FABC contact person with MECC, an MECC contact with CCA–FABC, to inform the partner body of programs, publications and problems and to facilitate ongoing forms of cooperation.
- Now that the MECC visit to Asian countries and the CCA visit to the Gulf have been carried out, the next step would seem to be the formation of a joint MECC–CCA committee to plan concrete, cooperative projects for pastoral care.
- If the CCA–FABC directory for migrants is to be comprehensive, it needs the full cooperation of the MECC. The CCA–FABC team preparing the directory should meet with representatives of Gulf churches to plan the contribution of Gulf churches to the proposed directory.
- If possible, MECC might send an intern to learn more about migrant issues and related activities in Asia. CCA could coordinate the program.
(Prawate Khid-Arn, Rex Reyes, Thomas Michel)

CCA in Action

Cambodian
Ecumenical
Initiatives

At a historic gathering in Hong Kong, church leaders from Cambodia agree to work together

It was a historic event. For the first time, eighteen church leaders from Cambodia gathered together. For some it was the first time that they had ever travelled outside Cambodia. They met in response to an invitation from the Christian Conference of Asia and the Hong Kong Christian Council to take part in a consultation on 'Ecumenical Initiatives in Cambodia' in Hong Kong 5–9 May. The leaders represented both denominational and independent churches and there were pastors from both Phnom Penh and the provinces.

The first day was spent visiting churches in Hong Kong and the Hong Kong Christian Council. The Cambodian church leaders met with Hong Kong church leaders from the Anglican Church in Hong Kong, the Baptist Church in Hong Kong, the Methodist Church in Hong Kong, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Hong Kong and the Church of Christ in China, Hong Kong. The purpose of these visits was to inspire the visiting church leaders to see the ways that churches from differing traditions work, witness and serve together. The contrast between the resources that the Cambodian churches



Cambodian church leaders and hosts at CCA Centre

have and those of Hong Kong was very great. However the visits achieved their purpose. The leaders left feeling positive and impressed by what they saw. They heard many stories of the ways in which the churches of Hong Kong work together and contribute to the life of the SAR through their life, witness and service.

Dr Tso Man King, General Secretary of the Hong Kong Christian Council, welcomed the leaders to Hong Kong and affirmed the faith, courage and leadership of the Cambodian churches following the dark days of Pol Pot. He affirmed that 'the unity of the church is a prerequisite for strong witness in the world'.

The next two days were spent at the CCA Centre. Dr Feliciano V. Cariño, General Secretary of CCA, welcomed the Cambodians and encouraged them to remember that all worship the same God, are saved by the same Saviour and that therefore are already united. He then introduced the life of CCA and the global ecumenical movement to the leaders and encouraged them to talk and listen to each other and so deepen

their faith and relationships. Ephesians 4:1–6 was the passage that Dr Tso Man King used when addressing the leaders later. He reminded them that the Gospel must be separated from Western values and interpreted in an Asian context. Removing the labels and imposed values from the past would free the church to demonstrate in an Asian way its unity and witness.

The reports made by the leaders of the situation of the church in Cambodia were both encouraging and disturbing. It was encouraging to hear many reports of the development and growth of the life of the churches. More are being established and some of the difficulties of the past are being overcome. However, over the past several years, while there seems to have been a rapid growth in the number of churches, at the same time there has been little growth in the proportion of the population that is Christian. The mission initiatives of churches outside Cambodia are part of the problem. It was noted that the church in Cambodia is made up of Swiss, French, Korean and Singapore Methodists,

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Baptists, Assemblies of God, the Cambodian Evangelical Church (CMA), Anglicans, charismatic and independent churches and Roman Catholics. There are also two inter-church bodies, one Bible school and a number of other associations, all registered with the government. Additionally many non-government organisations, both Christian and non-Christian, serve in Cambodia.

When exploring the possibilities of ecumenical cooperation in Cambodia, two possibilities emerged. The first was the need for greater unity within the fragmented independent churches. This group of churches lacks any cohesion and they tend to have been established by individual pastors without any links to denominational bodies. This group makes up almost half of the number of congregations in Cambodia. Before unity can be explored and demonstrated within the wider life of the Cambodian church unity must be found within the independent churches of Cambodia. Those attending the consultation from the independent churches made a commitment to establish a coordination committee of Cambodia Independent Churches (CIC) in order to build greater unity and better coordination.

The second decision made by all present was to establish a Kampuchea Christian Council (KCC). The participants identified a series of steps that needed to be taken to achieve this outcome and a goal was set for the registration of KCC with the Ministry of Religious Affairs. The participants agreed on the membership of a work-

ing group to draw up the constitution for the KCC and to approach other churches not represented in the consultation to be part of the process. CCA offered support and encouragement in the establishment of the Kampuchea Christian Council.

As the consultation ended and the good-byes were said it was deeply felt that it had indeed been a historic event, not simply because of the presence of the fifteen church leaders, but more particularly because of the decisions made.

(John Gilmore)

South Asian Church Leaders Consult on Rights of Migrant Workers

Migrant workers are increasingly becoming scapegoats for a host of social problems. As aliens they can be targets of suspicion or hostility in the communities where they live and work. Often less privileged, financially poor, they lack legal protection. Although in reality no human being is illegal and states have an obligation to ensure the protection of the fundamental human rights of all people in their territories, regardless of status, migrant workers face many forms of discrimination. Different standards are often applied to nationals, on the one hand, and migrants, on the other, regarding such matters as

job tenure and contracts. Living conditions for migrant workers are often unsatisfactory. Low incomes, high rents, housing shortages, lack of social security measures, and prejudice by locals are major problems for migrant workers. And South Asian migrant workers are the most vulnerable and exploited group of all.

The CCA International Affairs desk organised the South Asian Church Leaders' Consultation on Rights of Migrant Workers and Role of Churches in Providing Legal Aid Assistance, held in Colombo, Sri Lanka, 26–28 May, and thirty-three church leaders from Bangladesh, India, Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Kuwait tried to understand the wide-ranging problems of South Asian migrant workers.

Contemporary times have not seen any migration flows from South Asia that would come even close to the movement of people during the colonial period, when some thirty million left what was then British India and thirty-four million arrived. The most significant migration since then has been the flow of temporary workers to the Arabian Gulf and the permanent migration of a large number of South Asians to the United Kingdom and various other European countries and about 600,000 to the USA and Canada during the twenty years that followed independence. Migration to the Gulf countries from the subcontinent started when Iran built its first oil refineries and the oil companies recruited the Indian technicians of Burmah Oil in 1930. Since then labour migration from South Asia to the Gulf has increased. For example, in 1975 Asians in the Gulf countries, almost all Indians and Pakistanis, numbered

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559,000, slightly over half of whom were in the labour force. Ten years later the number of Asian workers in the Gulf exceeded 3.5 million, of which 2.2 million were from South Asia. Several thousand workers found jobs in the Gulf on a temporary basis for a period of two or four years to take advantage of three to ten times higher salaries than what they could get in their own countries. Labour shortages in the newly industrialised countries (NIC) in South East and East Asia created another opportunity for migrant workers from South Asian countries. But compared to the number of South Asians in the Gulf, the number in the NIC are less. Now that these countries are facing severe economic crisis, migrant workers are being forced to leave or to work for small wages in difficult living conditions.

The construction boom in the thinly populated but oil-rich countries of the Gulf has attracted hundreds of thousands of migrant workers from Asia since the mid-1970s. While activity has slowed in recent years and some governments in the region, facing rising unemployment, have encouraged employers to recruit locally, overall numbers do not appear to have changed significantly.

The South Asian Church Leaders' Consultation proposed several recommendations for the churches in South Asia to be involved in the area of legal aid assistance, advocacy, and the campaign to ratify the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families:



Participants in Colombo, Sri Lanka, at the South Asian Church Leaders' Consultation on the Rights of Migrant Workers

- Before the next SAARC meeting country-based campaigns should be launched and delegates from each country should meet their head of state, ministry of foreign affairs and/or ministries concerned lobbying for the ratification of the convention.
- Churches should link up with the International Migrants Rights Watch Committee (IMRWC) and support its activities.
- South Asian NCCs should take the initiative to create awareness in their constituencies regarding migrant issues and the UN convention, and broaden the support base for advocacy.
- South Asian Churches should set up legal aid assistance and counselling centres, both in host countries as well as in the countries of origin, to help migrant workers.
- Churches and NCCs in South Asian countries and like-minded organisations should have networks or

coordination bodies to help migrant workers and to keep registers of those who are going abroad so that the families can be reached to counsel them. This could include preventive measures to help people considering going abroad to weigh the pros and cons by analysing the cost—the amount to be spent and whether it is realistic when one considers the actual amount that one could earn abroad. In other words, to see whether it is a feasible and worthwhile venture. Moreover, counselling could be offered as to how to arrange the running and caring of the family that is left behind.

This was the first time that CCA has taken the initiative to bring together South Asian church leaders to discuss the problems of migrant workers from the area and to discuss together the churches' role in providing legal aid to protect their rights.

(Mathews George Chunakara)

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The Enlarging Circle of Ecumenical Enablers

Reading the Bible with New Eyes Enablers Workshop III

Those who participate in ecumenical workshops do indeed gain new insights. Do they, however, take their experience back to their local contexts?

When regional workshops are becoming very costly are there other ways through which ecumenical exchanges and mutual enrichment can still be sustained?

Developing a strong CCA-wide core group of ecumenical enablers was envisaged as an answer to both of the above questions. If we succeed in establishing an Asia-wide, highly motivated and equipped 'enablers club' as it were, as a first step, then the enablers so equipped and motivated would then initiate local congregation-based movements and these local movements could from time to time be further facilitated and strengthened by a small group of enablers from neighbouring countries visiting them. Thus local congregations could be engaged in mission locally and also encouraged by ecumenical teams.

This dream is beginning to be realised. The first two workshops in Pattaya (Thailand) and Kaohsiung

(Taiwan) helped spark off national workshops in Thailand, Bangladesh and Indonesia, each with its own distinctive characteristics and potentials.

Now a third enablers' workshop has been held, 25 May–2 June 1998, co-sponsored by NCC Korea and CCA Mission and Evangelism, in the Daehang Prayer Centre, two hours drive from Seoul. There were twenty-six participants from outside Korea and six from within.

Daehang Prayer Centre provided a wonderful spiritual atmosphere. We breathed fresh air and were fed and looked after with lavish generosity, along with the inimitable personal care of Rev. Choi, Director, Mrs Choi and a team of volunteers. But everyone also felt surrounded by prayer, although no-one wore their piety on their lapels and nobody minded that the theology we discussed was quite different from theirs. So the experience was really and truly ecumenical. There were certain physical discomforts, such as having to go out for toilets and showers,

but, remarkably, no-one seemed to mind such small inconveniences.

Rev. Lin and Rev. Whang of the NCCK staff (Education and Mission) stayed with us to ensure the smooth running of the workshop.

The following highlights need to be mentioned.

On the Wednesday we went to three neighbouring rural churches. All three congregations were charismatic and they welcomed us warmly although Korean Christian newspapers had published why we were running workshops on Reading the Bible with New Eyes—i.e. to equip local congregations for mission with the JPIC agenda. The program advocates the implementation by enlisting partners from all faiths and ideological groups, communicating the Gospel of God's righteous rule without a program of proselytising people of other faiths.

Nearly all the participants pledged a commitment to continue to be in touch with one another and to link up with the others who were participants



Ecumenical Enablers Workshop, Korea

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in the earlier regional and national workshops. The Council of Churches of Malaysia has offered to host the next workshop, which will probably be held in October. The Malaysian churches also made a tremendous impact in Korea as they had sent a cheque for \$US35,000 through their two participants, Rev. Devachariyam and Rev. Chin, towards the NCCK's program of famine relief for North Korea's starving millions.

The story-sharing session this time made everyone feel how Asian churches need to be informed of each other's experiences. We had a Roman Catholic, Br Daud, who shared with us the story of the self-sacrifice of Bishop Joseph John to awaken the conscience of those who abused the blasphemy law in Pakistan.

The Indonesians told us about the recent struggle in their country. Rev. Wu Fu Ya of Taiwan shared the story of the emergence of Taiwanese identity as that of a new nation with aspirations for independence. Faustina, a former nun, now a teacher and activist, brought awareness once again about Dalits, this time with emphasis on Dalit religion and culture.

During the evaluation it was recommended that CCA should facilitate more story sharing and networking.

We thank God that when funding for ecumenical events is becoming a very big problem there is however a revival of interest in developing and strengthening Asian ecumenical solidarity. May God bless this enthusiasm and deepen the commitment of all of us.

(Dhyanchand Carr)

Christian Youth Examine the Impact of Globalisation

The CCA Youth Desk organised 'Consultation on Globalisation: Development with a Human Face' 8–16 April 1998 in Kuala Lumpur and Sibul, Sarawak, Malaysia. It was hosted by the Council of Churches of Malaysia and IDEAL (Integrated Development for Eco-friendly and Appropriate Lifestyle), a local NGO in Sibul. Sixteen Christian youth from Malaysia, Cambodia, India, Indonesia, Japan, Pakistan, the Philippines, Taiwan and Thailand attended.

The aims of this consultation were:

- to examine the relationship between development and human rights in an Asian context
- to examine impact of globalisation in Asian countries
- to explore possibilities and models of alternative development in Asia
- to facilitate exchange among Christian youth networks and to strengthen the ecumenical youth movement in Asia.

During the consultation the participants were exposed to three communities of the Iban Dayak tribe, an indigenous people in Sibul. The Iban Dayak live in longhouses, containing fifteen to forty families. However, although they live under one roof, each household has its own separate unit with an open verandah where they can meet and entertain visitors. The participants savoured the welcoming hos-

pitality of the longhouse dwellers during an overnight stay. They also saw the effects of globalisation—the once-dense forests are now being cleared for oil palm and rubber plantations. The logging has also caused a loss of habitat and has had an adverse impact on water quality due to soil erosion. Many plant and animal species have been affected and some could become extinct if preventative measures are not taken. The Ibans' land rights have also been endangered due to legal changes since 1990.

The participants stayed in the Three Pillars Farm, where they learnt about fish farming and rotational and organic farming. They were enthusiastic about the tree plantation at the farm and planted saplings of khattan and rattan trees. Moreover, the participants got to know more about IDEAL, which works with the marginalised and indigenous communities of Sarawak. The objective of IDEAL is to empower indigenous people regardless of race or gender in building a democratic society and deciding their own futures where:

- the customary and human rights of all people in Sarawak are recognised and protected
- the cultural traditions of the people of Sarawak are respected and celebrated
- a balance is maintained between development and sustainable use of the land and natural resources.

The youth also shared information of the impact of globalisation on the participating countries:

Malaysia—The opening up of large areas of fertile land for oil palm and rubber plantations has resulted in the erosion of the rights and culture of in-

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indigenous peoples to make way for development that benefits the local elite and consumers abroad.

Philippines—71.9 per cent of the population are living below the poverty line, ironically most of them from the countryside who produce the food for the rest of the population.

Cambodia—Cambodia has banned log exports since 31 December 1996 yet top officials have colluded in an illegal timber trade, worth at least \$US130 million in the past year, according to the watchdog organisation Global Witness. Some of the money is used to rebuild the city of Phnom Penh, to pretend Cambodia is a developed country.

Pakistan—Youth are suffering from depression, lack of motivation and determination—especially youth from the Christian community, who are in a very bad shape due to racial and religious discrimination, economic barriers, poor family relationships and a lack of community and church support. Pakistan's fate is unemployment, inflation, devaluation and the growth of Islamic fundamentalism.

Japan—There is a great deal of child pornography, and child sexual videotapes are produced in Japan. Many illegal foreign workers are found in the country and their basic human rights are not protected.

Taiwan—Places where indigenous people are dwelling have now become targets for future bullet train railways or golf courses.

Indonesia—Corruption, manipulation, nepotism and collusion has brought down the economy.

India—Despite growth in some sectors of the Indian economy, stark poverty and oppression stares millions of Indians in the face.

Thailand—An increase of the value-added tax rate, higher prices for the daily consumer items, high inflation, the collapse of many big industrial corporations, the closing of many financial institutions and the non-availability of jobs is causing hardship.

Globalisation now poses a challenge to Christian communities, especially the youth, who in the future will inherit the problems of today's world. The participants realised that 'creation is God's self-expression bound in space and time. The spirit of God permeates and lives in the whole course of creation. Hence the whole of creation and all life are sacred. Pollution of air and water and destruction of nature and life or usage of technologies and energy sources causing such pollution and destruction are opposed to the divine law of creation.

'The earth is one big family and all human beings are brothers and sisters of one another. Individuals, communities, nations and religions are called

to live in harmony with one another and with the world of nature. Economic, social, political, religious and ideological systems and institutions should uphold the dignity of the human person and the solidarity of humankind. These are integral parts of the scheme of life and cannot be treated in isolation.

'The resources of the world are sufficient to satisfy the needs of all members of the human family but not to satisfy human greed. We are also responsible to future generations and hence have to be careful in our usage of energy sources and material sources of the planet, our one habitat in space. The happiness and welfare of all are our shared responsibility. Just and equitable distribution of Mother Earth's resources is our divine duty.'

On the whole the program was a real success. For CCA Youth, it was a God-sent opportunity to make friends and to know more about other Asian countries and all decided to help indigenous people in their own respective countries along the lines of IDEAL.

(Letty Mary George)



Participants in the Consultation on Globalisation learn about tree planting at the Three Pillars Farm in Sarawak, Malaysia

Forthcoming CCA Events

August

- Consultation of North East Church Leaders on Ethnic Conflict and Peace—India
- Reading the Bible through Asian Eyes Youth Workshop—Taiwan
- International Affairs visits—Maldives and Vietnam
- CCA participation in WCC meeting on the formation of an Ecumenical Forum—Geneva

September

- Christian–Muslim Dialogue—Bangkok
- Executive Staff Meeting
- Regional Training on Community-based Savings and Credit
- Joint meetings held by NCC India, CCA and WCC—includes meeting of NCC General Secretaries, Globalisation Consultation, Fiftieth Anniversary Celebrations of WCC, and preparation of delegates to WCC General Assembly
- CCA visit to North American partners
- CCA participation in WCC Regional Group meeting and meeting of Frontier Internship in Mission—Geneva

October

- CCA participation in NCC Australia National Forum
- National Human Rights Training—Nepal
- Asia Ecumenical Course—Thailand
- CCA participation in Synod of Church of North India
- Development and Service Intensive Training and Exchange Program—Thailand
- CCA participation in General Assembly of Church of Christ in Thailand
- CCA–WCC Indochina Core Group meeting—USA
- Rural Youth Exchange Training Workshop—Pakistan

November

- Executive Staff meeting
- Reading the Bible with New Eyes workshop—Thailand
- CCA General Committee and related meetings—India
- CCA participation in Assembly of Asian Church Women's Conference—Thailand
- CCA participation in WCC pre-Assembly events and Women's Decade Festival—Zimbabwe

December

- CCA participation in WCC Assembly—Zimbabwe

Seminary Students to Review Church Mission in Asia

CCA Youth will organise a biblical workshop under the Reading the Bible through Asian Eyes Series on 14–21 August 1998 in Taiwan. The theme of the workshop is 'Jesus the Outcast: Repositioning Church Mission in Asia'. Twenty-five seminary students from sixteen Asian countries will be invited. They will gather to reconsider and reposition church mission in Asia regarding ministries to marginalised people, to critically reflect on Christian faith in relation to their own country's situations—historical, economic, political, social and cultural—and to network and strengthen the ecumenical youth movement in Asia. Programs include inputs from theologians working with marginalised people, exposure visits to different local churches in Taiwan such as urban, rural and indigenous congregations, and sharing and exchange among participants from different Asian countries.

CCA General Committee

The CCA Executive Committee has accepted an invitation from the Marthoma Church in India to hold its next General Committee meeting in Kerala, India. The General Committee and related subcommittees will meet 20–27 November 1998.

WCC Appointment

The World Council of Churches has appointed Georges Lemopoulos, from Turkey, as Deputy General Secretary as from 1 January 1999.

Mr Lemopoulos is a member of the Orthodox Church (Ecumenical Patriarchate) and has been on the staff of the World Council of Churches since 1987. Commenting on the appointment, WCC General Secretary, Rev. Dr Konrad Raiser, said, 'Georges Lemopoulos brings to his new responsibility a unique range of broad ecumenical experience gained during more than two decades of work in the ecumenical movement.'

Malaysian Churches Appeal for North Koreans

In the middle of last year, the Executive Committee of the Council of Churches of Malaysia (CCM) decided to launch a nationwide appeal to the churches for immediate support in responding to the devastating drought and famine in North Korea. The plight and suffering of the people was featured prominently in the national media, attracting great sympathy from the Malaysian public. By the end of the year over \$US35,000 had been collected from special offerings

Jeremiah Achariam and Thomas Chin present a cheque from the Council of Churches of Malaysia for famine relief in North Korea to Kim Yong Tu of NCC Korea, when they attended a CCA workshop in Seoul in June

taken in local congregations all over the country. The money was sent to the National Council of Churches of Korea (NCKK) to strengthen their relief work in North Korea, coordinated with other ecumenical agencies stationed in that country. The NCKK believes that humanitarian aid is a concrete way to realise national reunification and reconciliation and a Christian witness and commitment to ecumenical sharing. CCM was happy to be in solidarity with Korean Christians in their program to 'assist brothers and sisters in the north', and to pray together for the unification of the two Koreas.

Rev. Kim Dong Wan, the General Secretary of NCKK, on receiving the contribution from CCM, commented that 'this was the best sign of south-south partnership within the context of Asian solidarity'. The fact that the Christian Conference of Asia is coordinating an Asian effort for humanitarian and financial assistance to North Korea makes the CCM contribution a clear indication of common commitment and the sharing of resources among the churches in Asia.

NCCJ Celebrates Fiftieth Anniversary

The National Christian Council in Japan (NCCJ) celebrated its fiftieth anniversary with an ecumenical worship service at the Waseda Church in Tokyo on 31 July 1998. The Rev. Lee In-Ha, a former Moderator of NCCJ, was the preacher and gave the main presentation.

The history of the formation of the NCCJ goes back to before World War II. It was finally inaugurated on 17 May 1948, after work for its formation was suspended during the war. The NCCJ is one of the founding members of CCA, and has provided vital ecumenical leadership and participation in the life of the ecumenical movement in Asia. The Rev. Tokuzen Yoshikazu of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Japan and the Rev. Kenichi Otsu of KYODAN are the current Moderator and General Secretary respectively.

The CCA was represented at the fiftieth anniversary service by its General Secretary, Dr Feliciano V. Cariño.



Council of Churches in Malaysia Holds Triennial General Assembly

The Ninth Triennial General Assembly of the Council of Churches in Malaysia (CCM) met at the YMCA in Penang, Malaysia, on 22–24 April 1998. Meeting around the theme 'In Christ We Stand Together: Building Unity, Spreading Peace, Sharing Goodwill', the assembly laid down a program for the work of CCM in the coming years that embodies the four dimensions of international witness, national witness, denominational witness and personal witness.

The assembly statement underscored the task of the council in:

- the areas of peace, justice and ecumenical relations
- the formation of 'Christian public opinion [to] bring it to bear on moral, social, national and international problems ... particularly those affecting the life and welfare of the people of Malaysia'
- engaging in 'active dialogue with the government to protect the rights of the churches to practise and propagate their faith'
- recognising the rich variety of Christian life and witness embodied in the doctrine, faith and order of its member churches and bringing these into a common life of active witness to Christ
- raising up a 'new generation of leaders who are alive in Christ and will carry on the work of the council in the future'.

The assembly also elected the following principal officers of the council:

- President—
Rt Rev. Datuk Yong Ping Chung
- Deputy President—
Rt Rev. Julius D. Paul
- Vice Presidents—
Bishop Dr Peter Chio,
Cor Episcopa Philip Thomas,
Major Lim Teck Fung
- General Secretary—
Rev. Dr Hermen Shastri
- Honorary Treasurer—
Mok Cheh Liang

Japan Anglican Synod Decisions

The Fifty-first Regular General Synod of Nippon Sei Ko Kai, meeting at St Andrew's Church in the Diocese of Tokyo, 26–28 May 1998, made the following decisions among forty resolutions:

- The Rt Rev. John Makoto Takeda, Bishop of Tokyo, was elected Primate of NSKK on the first ballot, for a term of two years until the next General Synod in 2000.
- The Rev. Samuel Isamu Koshiishi was appointed Provincial Office General Secretary until the next General Synod in 2000.
- The canons of NSKK were changed to remove the qualification of 'male' to be ordained as priest of NSKK. This means that women may be ordained to the order of priest and the order of bishop, under 'guidelines' also approved by the synod.

National Council of Churches in Australia National Forum

The National Forum of the National Council of Churches in Australia will be held in Sydney on 1–5 October 1998. This will be the third meeting of the National Forum since the NCCA was inaugurated in 1994. It is expected to accept into membership the Lutheran Church of Australia. The NCCA Faith and Unity Commission will bring a major report on unity in the church and Mary Tanner, the Moderator of WCC Faith and Order, will be a keynote speaker. It is also expected that the National Forum will reflect on the changing political climate in Australia following the startling rise of the One Nation party in the Queensland elections. CCA will be represented at the meeting by Christine Ledger, Associate General Secretary for Finance.

New Appointment

Graham Tupper, International Programs Coordinator of the National Council of Churches in Australia, left the staff of NCCA in June 1998 to join the staff of the Australian Council of Overseas Aid in Canberra. Graham will be remembered for his good work in nurturing partnerships between churches in Australia and around the world, including many NCCs and church development agencies in other parts of Asia.

Behind the Scenes: CCA's Support Staff and Volunteers

The work of CCA depends heavily on the good and committed work of our support staff and volunteers



Support Staff: Back row: Helena Chan (Administrative Coordinator), Rosanna So (Administrative Assistant), Candy Ha (Administrative Assistant), Heddy Ha (Administrative Assistant), Joyce Leung (Assistant Accountant), Jennifer Ng (Receptionist), Tong Sui-Ho (Driver)
Front row: Lai Loong (Watchman/Caretaker), Betsy Wong (Volunteer—Library), Irene Chan (Administrative Assistant), Luk Wai Fun (Amah/Cleaner), Rubihartini (Cook)



Louise Scott
(Volunteer—Library)



Geoff Alves (Volunteer—located in Australia—Editor, CCA News)

General Secretary Invited to Church of North India Synod Meeting

The Church of North India (CNI) has issued an invitation to the General Secretary of the Christian Conference of Asia (CCA) to give the Bible studies at its forthcoming Tenth Synod Meeting, which will be held in New Delhi, India, on 7–12 October 1998.

CNI is a united church that evolved out of a union of six churches, and is considered one of the concrete 'first fruits' of the modern ecumenical movement. Born on 29 November 1970, in Nagpur, after a series of consultations that began in 1929 with a view to church union in North India, CNI includes the former Council of

Baptist Churches in Northern India, the Church of the Brethren in India, the Disciples of Christ, the Church of India, Pakistan, Burma and Ceylon), the Methodist Church, British and Australasian Conferences, and the United Church of Northern India. Its geographical area covers all of the states of the Indian Union, except the four states of South India. It covers 80 per cent of the area and 75 per cent of the population of India, and holds within the life of its congregations all the cultural, social and political differences of India's people and vast territory. Celebrating its silver jubilee in 1995

under the theme of 'Unity, Witness and Service', CNI's tenth synod meets in 1998 around a theme that is to propel its relevant witness as a united church towards the twenty-first century. Composed now of over 900,000 members spread over 3,000 congregations in twenty-three dioceses, CNI runs several degree colleges and inter-colleges, hundreds of secondary and primary schools and a very large number of hospitals, agricultural institutes and social service projects.

The Most Reverend D.K. Mohanty is Moderator and Dr V.S. Lall is General Secretary of the CNI Synod.

(Feliciano V. Cariño)

CCA Executive Staff Vacancies

The Executive Committee of the Christian Conference of Asia at its meeting on 13–14 May 1998, in Hong Kong SAR, China, has authorised the announcement of vacancies for two executive staff positions.

Associate General Secretary for Finance

Due to the difficult health condition of her parents, Christine Ledger has submitted her letter of resignation, effective 1 January 1999, in order for her to return to Australia and be more directly involved in their care.

The Associate General Secretary for Finance is the executive staff member responsible for the financial operations and management of CCA, for the interpretation of the life and work of CCA and for seeking support for the CCA's various activities and programs.

Details of the job description and the terms and conditions of work are available upon request.

Executive Secretary for Mission and Evangelism

Dr Dhyanchand Carr, who has been the Executive Secretary for Mission and Evangelism of CCA since 1992, returned to India in June this year in order to reassume his position as a member of the faculty of the Tamil Nadu Theological Seminary in India.

This executive staff position is that responsible for the development and implementation of the program on Mission and Evangelism of CCA. It involves the capacity to deal with the issues and enable activities that relate to the wide range of concerns of mission and evangelism in an ecumenical context in Asia, and what role the CCA as a regional ecumenical organisation plays in relation these issues and activities.

Details of the job description and the terms and conditions of work are available upon request.

General Requirements for Applications

Applicants for CCA executive staff positions, in addition to having the relevant academic background and appropriate work experience in ecumenical life and activities, must show an understanding of the ecumenical movement in Asia and a strong commitment to it and to the mission of the church. They must be active members in good standing of one of the member churches of CCA. Applications must include the following:

- A formal letter of application addressed to the General Secretary of CCA.
- A complete curriculum vitae of the candidate.
- An endorsement from his or her church and National Council of Churches, if any, to which his or her church belongs.
- Two referees to whom CCA may write directly.
- A medical certificate.

Dates, Terms and Place of Appointments

The Personnel Committee of the CCA will have its first meeting on 3–4 September 1998 to begin the process of recommending appointments. Other meetings will be held if necessary preparatory to the meeting of the General Committee on 20–27 November 1998, when the appointments will be made.

Terms of appointments will begin on 1 January 1999, and will be effective for four years.

Executive staff of the CCA are based in Hong Kong SAR, China, where CCA has its office.

Correspondence and Enquiries

Correspondence and enquiries regarding these positions and applications for them should be directed to Dr Feliciano V. Cariño, General Secretary, Christian Conference of Asia, 96, Second District, Pak Tin Village, Mei Tin Road, Sha Tin, NT, Hong Kong.

CCA Youth Internship, 1999

CCA Youth is recruiting an intern aged 18–30 to work at the CCA Centre, Hong Kong SAR, China, from January to June 1999 for the publication of a Reading the Bible through Asian Eyes series. The applicant should be a participant in one of the workshops under the named series, either a theological student or interested in theological formation, expressive in English, skilful in computer desktop publishing and recommended by a CCA member council or member church. Applications should reach CCA Youth on or before 1 October 1998. For details, please contact Ms Lung Ngan Ling, Executive Secretary for Youth, CCA, in Hong Kong.

CCA Rural Youth Internship, 1999

CCA Youth is recruiting a rural intern aged 18–30 to work in the Chiang Mai office of the Youth Department of the Church of Christ in Thailand from January to December 1999 for the CCA Rural Youth Internship. The applicant should be a rural youth leader involved with organising of a local Rural Youth Project for at least one year, recommended by their local project organisations. Applications should reach CCA Youth on or before 1 October 1998. For details, please contact Ms Lung Ngan Ling, Executive Secretary for Youth, CCA, in Hong Kong.

Lecturer in Theology: Missiology and Evangelism, United Theological College, Sydney, NSW, Australia

Applications are called for the Lectureship in Theology: Missiology and Evangelism, to be filled from 1 January 1999, or as soon as possible thereafter. Applicants should be highly qualified to teach in this field and have experience in integrating theology with the praxis of ministry. Applications are welcomed from suitably qualified people, lay or ordained. United Theological College is the college recognised by the NSW Synod of the Uniting Church in Australia for preparing candidates for its ministries. It is a member of the Sydney College of Divinity. Full details of this appointment may be obtained from Rev. Dr Sarah Mitchell, Principal, UTC, 16 Masons Drive, North Parramatta NSW 2151, Australia (phone + 61 2 9683 3655, fax + 61 2 9683 6617, e-mail utc@nsw.uca.org.au), with whom applications close on Friday, 29 August 1998.

Principal, United Theological College, Bangalore

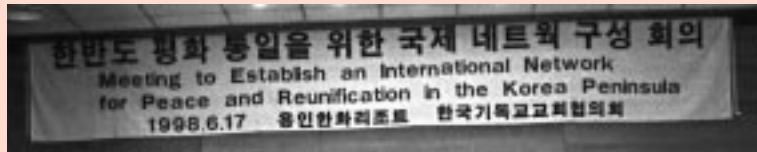
The United Theological College, Bangalore, India, invites applications for the post of the Principal of the College (which falls vacant in June 2000) from candidates with the required qualifications and experience.

The candidate:

- should be a recognised theological teacher, possessing an earned doctorate degree from one of the internationally reputed institutions in one of the subjects within the theological discipline
- should be a recognised scholar with a sufficient number of publications to his/her credit
- should have had at least five years of teaching experience in a recognised theological college(s)
- should be between the age of 45 and 60 years
- should be an Indian national
- should be committed to the mission of the church with an ecumenical outlook
- should have three to five years of administrative experience in theological college(s)/ecumenical body(ies).

Applications should be addressed to the Chairman, Search Committee, United Theological College, Post Box No. 4613, 63 Miller's Road, Bangalore 560 046, India. The last date to receive applications is 31 December 1998.

Korean Peace and Reunification



A CCA delegation attended an International Conference for Peace and Reunification, organised by the National Council of Churches in Korea. The conference was followed by a peace march and televised musical festival organised by a multireligious coalition. (See story page 9.)



Participants at the international conference in Korea



Feliciano Cariño (General Secretary, CCA) and Victor Hsu (NCCC USA)



Dr Cariño, Prof Jae Joung Lee (Anglican Church, Korea), Rev Kim Dong Wan (NCC Korea General Secretary) and Rev. Kenichi Otsu (NCC Japan General Secretary) at the meeting to establish an international network for peace and reunification on the Korean peninsula



Peace marchers assemble



Dr Cariño addresses the meeting



Musical entertainment

