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# CCA NEWS



CHRISTIAN CONFERENCE OF ASIA • ASIA MISSION CONFERENCE • DIAMOND JUBILEE CELEBRATIONS



**Churches in Asia come together in a common obedience of witness to God's mission in the world.**

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## Asia Mission Conference is set to begin in Yangon, Myanmar

The Asia Mission Conference organized by the Christian Conference of Asia (CCA) is all set to commence from 12 October in Yangon, Myanmar.

More than 600 participants representing member churches, councils, ecumenical partners, missionaries, missiologists, theologians, theological students, inter-faith leaders and others from Asia and around the globe have started arriving in Yangon to attend the historic Asia Mission Conference and the Diamond Jubilee celebrations of CCA.

The AMC-2017 coincides with CCA's diamond jubilee will be hosted by the Myanmar Baptist Convention (MBC) and the Myanmar Council of Churches (MCC) from 12 to 16 October 2017.

The theme of the AMC-2017 is "Journeying Together: Prophetic Witness to the Truth and Light, in Asia." This is the fourth time that CCA organises a major mission conference in its sixty years of

history. The last Asia Mission Conference of CCA was held 23 years ago in 1994 in Seoul, South Korea.

CCA was founded in 1957 at the Asian Church Leaders' Conference held in Prapat, Indonesia on the theme, "Our Common Evangelistic Tasks in Asia".

"While being engaged in its mission and witness, the CCA has journeyed through the past six decades to fulfil its mandates of serving and enriching the churches in Asia", says CCA General Secretary Dr. Mathews George Chunakara.

"We ardently pray and sincerely hope that the Asia Mission Conference - 2017 and the Diamond Jubilee celebrations of the CCA, will facilitate deeper discussions, and will lead to greater dedication and to relevant and meaningful recapturing and re-articulation of our commitment to the mission, the act of the Almighty God", the CCA General Secretary added.

The AMC will begin with an opening

worship in the morning of October 12 and the closing session will be held in the afternoon on October 16.

The Diamond jubilee celebration is scheduled to be held on October 15 in a grand commemorative event at the Franc Auditorium, Ahlone Township in Yangon.

The co-ordinator and convenor of the local host committee convenor of the AMC Rev. Saw Shwe Lin said that there will be 5000 specially invited representatives of Myanmar churches will attend the thanksgiving service and diamond jubilee commemorative public meeting together with the international delegates of the AMC.

"We call upon all member churches, councils and all other partners of the CCA to observe Asia Sunday, on 15 October, in a most befitting way and to pray especially for the CCA," Mathews George Chunakara urged CCA member churches and councils.

## 600 delegates arrive for CCA conference

Christian Conference of Asia, organisers of the Asia Mission Conference 2017, said over 600 delegates from different churches and institutions registered for the one conference that opened in Yangon Wednesday.

"We appreciate the gesture of the authorities in Myanmar to open doors for such forums where attendees can freely discuss and engage in informal conversations that focus on the common ecumenical good of Asian countries and its citizens," said Dr Mathews George Chunakara.

Myanmar is striving hard to boost its economy by building a vibrant environment for regional and business and trade with neighbouring countries like China, Thailand, Vietnam, India and Bangladesh as well other countries globally.

Lauding Myanmar, Dr Chunakara said, "We appreciate the gesture of the authorities in Myanmar to open doors for such forums where attendees can freely discuss and engage in informal conversations that focus on the common ecumenical good of Asian countries and its citizens," said Dr Mathews George Chunakara.



Delegates register for the conference at Hotel Panda in Yangon, Myanmar.





## Vital role of churches in a polarised era

The 60th anniversary of Christian Conference of Asia in Yangon, Myanmar is an epochal event in the history of church in Asia. It assembles high-ranking clerics from Bishops, reverends, pastors, missionaries, missiologists, deacons, deaconesses, lay-leaders to para-church and NGO representatives in Yangon, Myanmar to celebrate the diamond jubilee.

The week-long conference gives delegates a forum to interact and exchange church and mission news and new ideas. It is a good opportunity to discuss various topics from an ecumenical perspective in a 21st century world. We know the clash of civilisations, regional conflicts, internally displaced communities, made worse by energy wars, recession, high jobless rates and natural calamities catalysed by climate change polarises the world severely.

Clerics and laypersons from various churches and countries bring their respective experiences to share in this conference. Many have positive stories to share. Some may share their difficulties of working in hostile states.

Provinces in some countries ruled by rightist governments, masquerading as democracies, have passed laws that forbid people from freely practising the religion of their choice or change. While some countries have launched programmes to persecute and force Christians to renounce their faith at public events under labels such as 'Return Home'.

Asian churches as well as rest of the world face many challenges today. These include laws against minorities, state-sponsored persecution, religion and caste based profiling, denying equal rights and inclusive economic participation to Christians in Asia.

This conference must address these issues. This calls for a planned campaign in United Nations forums and other international groups that uphold democratic principles, pluralism and equal rights for all communities.

I hope this conference gives fresh impetus to spread the light and the redeemer's message according to the Great Commission given to us by our Lord Jesus Christ in the Gospel according St Matthews chapter 28.

## ASIA MISSION CONFERENCE THEME:

'Journeying Together: Prophetic Witness to the Truth and Light in Asia'

# 'I am the light of the world'

Asia Mission Conference 2017 theme 'Journeying Together: Prophetic Witness to the Truth and Light in Asia' revolves around the present-day situation in Asia and in the world. The main features of the theme will help delegates ponder over Christian witness amid adverse realities the world faces today. The theme stresses the hope and trust we have in God's promises.

The CCA draws the theme for the conference based on the Gospel according to St John chapter 18 verse 37 that say, "I have come into the world to bear witness to the truth." It theme also

pins its hope on Jesus' promise that John writes in chapter 8 verse 12, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me, will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."

The themes of AMC 2017 are significant. They link well to the role and relevance of the CCA through its six decades long journey in Asia. Indeed, CCA shines as an instrument of God. It works on behalf Asian churches and bears prophetic witness in Asia.

The prophetic witness to the truth germinates on the vision of the Kingdom of God, Jesus proclaimed. The truth infers freedom and liberation is for all God's people and the entire cosmos. This highlights the essence of the Gospel message.

The Old Testament tells us the Israelites embarked on a journey towards the fulfilling the promise God gave Abraham that 'all nations of the Earth shall be blessed'.

This promise comes to fruition in Jesus Christ when he made the two groups one. He broke the barrier - "the dividing wall of hostility" [Ephesians 2:14]. Jesus embraced the Jew and the Gentile to set up a New Covenant. The Church, called to embrace both Jew and Gentile as "People of God" [I Peter 2:9-10] is a community of prophets chosen to continue to uphold the values of the New Covenant, and partake in its promise [Hebrews 9:15].

The affirmation of the Church's mission hinges in the Trinitarian faith and on the conviction that God creates, cares for, heals and restores the world. The church mission works on our belief that God intends to bring all people to Him. We play the role of God's partners and co-workers to set up His reign over all life.

Jesus proclaimed the Gospel was the reign of God. To fulfil his mission of God's reign, Jesus walked among sinners, poor and the lowly. He proclaimed the Truth and courageously confronted the dominant powers and structures. He challenged the prevailing norms while proclaiming the Truth. His actions often caused conflicts with the authorities. This led to his trial, crucifixion and death on the cross.

The death and resurrection of Christ declares that the churches' mission is not confined to comfort zones. It is an invitation to live a life of costly discipleships, to witness boldly and shine as the light and salt of the Earth.

Jesus exemplified the theology of prophetic witness through his actions. Jesus' prophetic theologising revealed a new basis. The foundational experience of the prophetic witness of Jesus is evident throughout his public ministry. He showed to the world, the significance of his prophetic witness, and the paradigm of his mission to the oppressed. The prophetic witness of Jesus continues to challenge and motivate us to be faithful to the Truth.



Neill Harrold Ballantyne and Jacynthia Murphy from the Anglican Church in Aotearoa New Zealand.



Participants of AMC at the Myanmar Baptist Convention.





Clockwise from top... Youth have fun at the event. Delegates seen at the registration desk for the AMC and CCA events. Above, volunteers pose for posterity.

AMC SCHEDULE, Thursady, 12 October 2017							
7 - 8 AM	8 - 8.20 AM	8.30 - 10 AM	10 - 11 AM	11 - 11.30 AM	11.30 - 12.30 PM	12.30 - 1.00 PM	1 - 2.30 PM
Breakfast	Travel to AMC venue 'Franc Auditorium from hotels.	Opening Worship Welcome, Greetings Introductory Remarks Bishop Willem T. P. Simarmata Moderator of CCA - Dr. Mathews George Chunakara General Secretary of CCA.	Thematic Presentation - I. 'Journeying Together: Prophetic Witness to the Truth and Light, in Asia' - Rev. Dr. Wesley Ariarajah Emeritus Professor, Drew University / Methodist Church of Sri Lanka.	Break Tea/Coffee.	Thematic Presentation - II. 'Journeying Together: Mission as Prophetic Accompaniment' - Archbishop Dr. Paul Kwong Hong Kong Sheng Kung Hui	Introducing the 'Asia Mission Statement' • On behalf of the Drafting Team: (Rev. Dr. Huang Po Ho Prof. Dr. Mammen Varkey Rev. Dr. Septemmy Lakawa)	Lunch
POST LUNCH SCHEDULE							
1 - 2.30 PM		4 - 4.30 PM		4.30 - 5.30 PM		5.30 - 6 PM	6 - 9 PM
Panel presentation I Nurturing Inter Religious Harmony and Peace Rev Dr Albert Sundaraj Walters Anglican Church Diocese of West Malaysia. Ms Kathy Min Din, Myanmar Council of Churches. Bishop Dr Prem Chand Singh, Church of North India.		Break Tea/Coffee		Group discussion -I 'Religious Intolerance: Politicisation of Religion,  and Religious Extremism'		Evening prayers.	Dinner.





Participants at the Asian Ecumenical Disability Advocacy Network (AEDAN) programme held Wednesday at Hotel 99, Yangon, Myanmar.

# AEDAN calls for transparent inclusion

**W**e, 63 participants including person with disabilities, met in Yangon from 9-11 October 2017, on the occasion of the Christian Conference of Asia's 60th anniversary. We are grateful to CCA for thoughtfully holding its Regional Consultation on People with Disabilities: Strength in Weakness and Quests for Dignity. We consist of representatives, including people with disabilities (PWDs) from the CCA member churches, National Councils, their related care-giving institutions and organisations, Church leaders, theologians, academicians, professionals and the families of the PWDs.

There were conversations based on the United Nations and ecumenical frameworks with academic and practical knowledge through sharing sessions and story-telling sessions by PWDs, care-givers and the care-giving institutions. We have scanned the religious and societal status of PWDs by listening to reports from 13 Asian countries. We realised that the context and status of the PWDs remain the same everywhere. Stigmatisation and discrimination are in practice, and PWDs and their families are pushed to a social isolation.

We appreciate churches across the globe for actively engaging in caring for PWDs through differ-

## Statement/Comunique:

### The Christian Conference of Asia - Regional Consultation on People with Disabilities: Strength in Weakness and Quests for Dignity.

ent diaconal interventions; however, we solicit churches to be much more proactive in terms of being inclusive, by affirming and practising the interdependency with and among PWDs. We were challenged by the statement 'Gospel is Gospel' for all and that it has to be com-

municated with wholeness, without any dichotomy, and by avoiding the labelling of our faiths by a generalising theology. We are motivated to brand them preferably as 'disabled people' instead of 'people with disabilities'. Their presence, participation, expressions and experi-

ences are the sources to develop theologies of the disabilities and theologies of inclusion.

We were inspired by the prayers, songs sung in sign language and art (using legs) by the participants in this consultation. Hence, we expect the churches to express their inclusion by adapting similar methodologies that are inclusive.

We were cautioned by the PWD participants not to use PWDs for projects and as objects for fund-raising. At the same time, we called to move from 'charity' model to inclusive model of diaconal and ministerial interventions.

We do realise that the Churches are mostly influenced by ideologies like 'ableism' and 'patriarchy'. This makes the church have a minimal focus on the ministerial importance towards PWDs.

We were challenged to believe, affirm and practise inclusivity in all socio-religious spectrums of our lives. In this context we are made to recognise:

- That PWDs are 'also' created in the image of God by the same Creator with equal qualities.

- Some biblical passages seem to be 'exclusive' and 'discriminatory' toward PWDs but by adapting disability hermeneutics, one could experience the inclusive nature of the same passages.



Dr George Mathews Chunakara addresses participants while Dr Reynaldo Racaza look on.



- Right to worship and to participate in the mission and ministries of the Churches is the fundamental right of every Christian, including PWDs. Therefore, the Church as a body of Christ is yet to learn to practise a 'transparent inclusion', by creating a physical space for the PWDs, by becoming an accessible and inclusive church both physically and spiritually.

- The aroma of Asian spirituality is nothing but inclusive, and upholds unity and diversity. Therefore, it is an ecumenical call for the Asian churches to promote inclusive spirituality that affirms dignity and respect of all, for all, with all, including PWDs.

- All governments are party in upholding the UN Convention of People with Disabilities and therefore, it would be an opportunity for the CCA and the Asian Churches to ecumenically involve in affirming, promoting and defending the rights of the PWDs with the 'kingdom' values of the Justice, Peace and Hope.

Therefore we commit ourselves to...

- Reading the Bible with inclusive lenses by adapting disability hermeneutics
- Affirm, defend and promote the rights of PWDs spiritually, theologically, ministerially and diaconially
- Articulate the theologies and missiologies of inclusion
- Promote disabled-friendly congregations, by inculcating the culture of inclusion and practise fuller accessibility for all

- Encourage PWDs to actively participate in the ministries of the Church and pursue theological education
- Develop disabled-friendly worship resources by joining with Christian liturgy publishing houses.

We appeal to...

- The CCA and its member churches and councils to practise and promote 'transparent-inclusion' by becoming inclusive and practising accessibility.
- The CCA to initiate a network of disability ministries of the member churches and councils to inspire and encourage, to open a dedicated disability programme and deliberately have a PWD as a facilitator of the programme team.
- The CCA to act as a ramp to emancipate the theological and ministerial knowledge on disability concerns in Asia by wheel-chairing disability conversations for cross-learnings with hearing aids and cross-fertilization with the help of crutches.

- The Asian Ecumenical Disability Advocates Network, to incessantly work on bringing the unheard conversations and stories of emancipation of the PWDs, in Asia to enlighten member churches and Councils, as we march towards a society and Ecclesia for all, by all, and with all.

**Yangon, October 11, 2017  
- Adopted by the participants**



**National Council of Churches in India representative and co-facilitator of AEDAN Christopher Rajkumar addresses the attendees.**



# Call to explore partnerships and new goals

“It’s going to be wonderful opportunity to remind ourselves of the depth of relationships that exist among the churches in Asia and how we’ve been able to stand alongside each other through many difficult experiences as churches in the last 60 years. It’s a very hopeful time because it reminds us we have brothers and sisters in Christ in the journey of our discipleship.”

**- Terrence Ian Corking,  
Uniting Church in Australia.**



“The AMC and the CCA Julibee are big and important events, because we have to look back at the real goal of why we have the CCA in Asia and the belief that the Christian Church has to give an answer to the problems of real life. Of course we do hope that CCA can give something to the life of the people in Asia, and can play a part in bringing peace and reconciliation in Asia.”

**Bishop Willem T P Simarmata,  
Moderator, CCA.**



The Anglican Church in Japan is not active in their ministry. By attending this conference, I want to learn from other churches in Asia and through sharing with others, I want be empowered and bring this empowerment to Japan, so that we can revive our ministry in Japan.

**- Cecilia Chikako Shimojo,  
Anglican Church of Japan.**



I’m attending my first CCA conference. I hope to make more friends and get to know the excellent ministry the CCA has done in the past 60 years. I love the AMC theme, to be the Light of Asia, and the bible study materials that say we should shine for the Lord and live out our identity as the Light of the World.

**- Tye Yau Iew Philip, Malaysia  
Theological Seminary.**

“As for the Methodist church of New Zealand, mission is our theme; so with the Asia Mission Conference we are looking forward to get new insights on how to carry out our mission in the 21st century in the Asian context.”

**Prince Devanandan,  
President, Methodist Church  
of New Zealand.**



“This AMC comes to us quite significantly because in a globalizing world, partnership, collaboration, linking are important areas we need to explore. I expect in this conference, we would be able to strengthen our partnerships, and be able to identify areas of ministries where we can collaborate together as a church.”

**Rev Jerson B Narciso, General  
Secretary, Convention of  
Philippine Baptist Churches.**







“My greatest expectation is that New Zealand will be able to play it's part in the growth and the work of the Christian Conference of Asia, and of the churches in Asia, so that we will be seen as a part of it.”

**Rev. Richard Dawson,  
Presbyterian Church of  
Aotearoa New Zealand.**



“I am grateful to CCA for requesting us to host the AMC. We have been preparing for this conference to be successful and a blessed one. When we look at the subject matter and resource persons, this will not only benefit the participants but the local people. We have prepared at our best. We seek feedback from participants.”

**Rev. Dr. Yam Kho Pa,  
General Secretary of Myanmar  
Baptist Convention.**

## ‘AMC will revitalise churches in Myanmar’



“I’m very happy to be here together with missionaries from Asia and we’re happy to be involved in the AMC. Our perspective is that... this is the right time to start our journey together, not only with other Christian denominations but also with other religions.”

**Rev. Mahn Palmerston,  
General Secretary of  
Myanmar Council of  
Churches.**



“On behalf of the Myanmar Baptist Convention, I am very happy to host the event for AMC and the CCA anniversary celebrations.”

**Rev. Maha San Their Tun,  
Treasurer, MBC.**

“I think this is best time for church leaders and ecumenical leaders to work for the future and to work closer together. This AMC for me will give some mission and guidelines for the churches in Asia to respond to the issues and challenges. ”

**PrawateKhid-arn, Former  
CCA General Secretary,  
Church of Christ in Thailand.**



“It makes me very happy to co-ordinate this kind of a great event in Myanmar. Thanks to the conference, the churches in Myanmar, which is witnessing a fatigue and struggle with regards to their unity, could be revitalised.”

**Rev. Saw Shwe Lin,  
former General Secretary  
of Myanmar Council of  
Churches.**





# Asian churches have to believe in wider ecumenism

“In the 21st century, our churches in Asia have to believe in wider ecumenism especially relations with people of other faiths and ideologies as part of their participation in God’s mission in this world. In that respect, the CCA has taken the lead in having fellowships with other like-minded theological positions and also with people with whom we differ. *So our principle is accept the thing that we can accept and respect the things that we differ on.* This is the understanding and vision of CCA.”

**- Dr. Joseph Marthoma,  
Metropolitan, Marthoma Syrian Church of Kerala, India.**



## Christian unity and cultural identity important for Asia

“In Asia’s multi-religious context - the Asian reality being unique and different from the European context - our culture, identity, and Christian unity is important and we should be able to give a unified testimony. In the complex situation of poverty and religious pluralism, our churches should stand together. This is a theological necessity and an existential need. There is a historical significance when an event of this scale is being held in Myanmar. It will give a message to the whole world.”

**- Dr. Kuraikose Theophilose Metropolitan, Prof. & Resident Metropolitan of  
The Malankara Syrian Orthodox Theological Seminary, Kerala.**

## ‘God is unique’

“I will be speaking at the venue on October 13. The core subject is spirituality. Different religions having different outlooks have to get together and evolve a common perspective on what actually spirituality is. God is unique irrespective of country, caste, colour and religion. Truth and light is unique and is applicable to all religious movements, all human beings... I think a conference like this orienting on the basic truth will unify religions and bring peace and harmony in the world.”

**- Swami Navananma Jnanatapaswi,  
Santhigiri Ashram, Kerala, India.**



## ‘CCA growing in quality’

“The CCA has been growing for the past 60 years, and it has been growing not only in quantity but also in quality. The churches and the councils around Asia are taking the CCA more seriously based on the needs of the Asian fellowship. So I hope the conference will help the churches and the CCA itself on the direction the churches should take especially in the fast-developing technological situation.”

**- Soritua Nabahan, Batak  
Protestant Christian Church of  
Indonesia.**