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LIVING TOGETHER
HOUSEHOLD OF GOD



Women Call for “Revolutionary Actions of Transformation”



By Ismael Fisco Jr.

At the women-led evening prayer on Saturday, women delegates to the general assembly asserted their calls through a statement entitled “Equal and Fuller Participation of Women, Children and Minorities in the Household of God.” The statement is an excerpt from the Pre-Assembly Women’s Forum on May 17-20.

The ceremony started with a creative drama presentation telling the stories of struggles of women and gender minorities in many parts of the world and how the church should play an important role to address them.

Through the statement, the women called upon the churches and ecumenical bodies for what they termed “revolutionary actions of transformation.”

It reads “In Asia, a lot of people are subjugated to sexual, economic, cultural and political discrimination and gender based oppression. We affirm that the liberation of women, children and gender minorities from the shackles of oppression, violence, war and terror is the liberation of all humanity. Gender justice is a pertinent call for the manifestation of the ‘Household of God’ in the midst of rampant economic globalization, escalating religious fundamentalism, and ecological degradation at global level.”

It also highlighted social realities and systems that gravely affect the situations of women: “Today, increasing global

capitalism, imperialism and privatization is creating a huge gap between the rich and the poor. Many people in Asia are vulnerable to extreme poverty. The feminization of poverty has increased gender-based violence and threatens the very existence of women and children in all spheres of life.”

It added “Gender identity and sexual orientation is not biologically given but self-determined, culturally constituted and politically manifested. The needs and rights of such minorities have been neglected and they are subjugated to discrimination and exclusion.”

Other issues they highlighted include domestic violence, sexual abuse, forced migration, the lack of equal participation in political and religious space, the vulnerability of women and children caught in between conflicts and disasters as well as HIV and other health issues.

Rev. Phyllis Wong Mei Fung from the Hong Kong Christian Council, who led the event, said: “We also wanted to assert the equal participation of women in church and to address the patriarchal interpretation of the bible that says men is more superior, that they should take leadership roles not the women. Even in our world today and in churches, there are women not being recognized. Women are not being ordained even if they are qualified and passionate

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Geopolitics: “Cooperation or Conflict?”

By Brue Van Voorhis

To help discern the theme from a different perspective, assembly delegates were allowed to engage in discussions on geo-politics facilitated by Dr. Leonard Hutabarat on Saturday, May 23rd.

Hutabarat, a career diplomat, is the acting director of the Center for Policy Analysis and Development on the American and European Region in the Indonesian Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Hutabarat’s lecture revolved around three concepts: power politics, perceptions and spheres of influence. He explained that geo-politics is simply “adding geography into the equation regarding the political, economic, military and cultural relationships between nations. In geo-politics, there is always the dynamic between power and a country’s interests, as well as the influence of the spheres of influence of other countries. Moreover, a government’s perception of the intentions and capabilities of other nations is another dimension of geo-politic,” he said.

In analyzing the foreign policy of a nation, Hutabarat challenged the participants to reflect in the question: “Does a country try to develop cooperation or conflict?”

“International relations try to avoid problems, try to develop cooperative behavior through institutions and try to find common interests instead of conflicting interests.”

He also cited some areas of tension in the region that include various maritime disputes among Asian nations, and the factors affecting international relations in Asia such as the economic and military rise of China and India, the renewed interest in the region by the United States and its alliances with Japan and South Korea and the expanding influence of Russia.

“Indonesia, which occupies a strategic geo-political

position in Southeast Asia, seeks to be a ‘bridge-builder’ in this neighborhood of the region where the interests of major powers inside and outside of Asia intersect.”

When asked about the role of religion in international affairs today, Hutabarat said “sometimes religion today is being misused for geo-political and economic reasons, those conflicts portrayed as being religious are, in reality, about politics and economics, that religion is being manipulated to gain support from their followers for these other agenda.” He added that “Indonesia tries to engage more moderate Muslims in relation to those espousing extreme ideas, for moderate Muslims want to live in harmony with people of other faiths, which could be adopted by other countries such as Pakistan.”

As for China, Hutabarat said that it uses investment and its economic strength as a form of “soft power.” “It is up to developing nations to use this aid wisely so that one day they are among the ranks of developed countries.”

He also explained that defense spending is based on a nation’s perceptions.

“When we perceive our neighbors as an enemy, we need to defend ourselves. The perception can be wrong based on miscalculations and miscommunication. Thus, countries purchase weapons because they don’t have trust-building measures. A meeting of foreign leaders is a way to build trust and prevent misperceptions.”

Hutabarat encouraged the church to play a role in addressing many of these issues, such as being advocates for governments to tackle the economic hardships that create fertile ground for religious extremism and to promote trust-building measures between nations that foster peace.

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for the ministry.”

Rev. Wong also said that they want to bring that message that “Women like men work together in partnership with God can advocate changes for more humane and just community. We envision empowered women, who are God-created children, who affirm our talents from God and contribute to his Kingdom. We want equality for the world and even in church setting.”

Women participants simultaneously read their statement, such revolutionary actions of transformation they proposed include: to practice zero-tolerance approach

for overcoming violence against women, children and marginalized groups in church and society; to commit to gender mainstreaming and sensitization; reclaim the liberating message of the bible integrating contextual, feminist post-colonial theology and spirituality; to analyse root causes of human trafficking and forced migration, among others.

They also called for the church to strengthen programs for gender justice and to promote gender auditing in all aspects of the church.

The assembly delegates affirmed their act of solidarity

Niles Lecture Invites Asian Churches to “Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace”

By Brue Van Voorhis

Named after D. T. Niles, the first General Secretary of the then-East Asia Christian Conference (EACC) and a leader of the global ecumenical movement, the Niles Lecture was integrated in CCA general assembly program in honour of the great leader.



The lecture was given by Dr. Isabel Apawo Phiri, Associate General Secretary for Public Witness and Diakonia of the World Council of Churches (WCC) and an African woman theologian, who shared her theological and biblical insights on the assembly theme “Living Together in the Household of God.”

Phiri divided the assembly theme into two parts, focusing separately on “living together” and the “household of God” and then putting the whole theme in the context of pilgrimage for justice and peace.

“Being an ecumenical church requires of us to share together our spirituality and to act together. It is these two which make the presence of Jesus Christ visible among us and in our witness in the world credible.”

“This witness is based on what we have heard God saying to us about the issues in the church or in the world. It is a space for analysis of the state of the church and the society today and the role of the church in the world.”

Phiri suggested that the Christian response to the world is not necessarily easy.

“Jesus challenges us to break free and step out from our deceptive comfort zones, to empathise with those who are in vulnerable situations and to make ourselves vulnerable. He clearly wants us to respond to realities in a caring and compassionate manner, to be able to yearn for justice and peace and to have the courage to respond, even when our interests and life are at stake. It is this costly discipleship that can make a difference in the world.”

“But we should not limit being followers of Christ to our denominational, ethnic, class, regional or national silos. We have to listen to each other’s narratives, challenges and successes. We need to accompany each other in our

lives as part of living together. This is the great ecumenical mandate that each of you has. This is why the ecumenical spaces are precious. The Christian Conference of Asia is a God-given instrument and opportunity for you to witness together as Asian churches!”

Regarding the household of God, Phiri discussed the concept in relation to one’s culture, biblical texts and the challenges that the household of God faces. She highlighted her own ecumenical, interreligious and multiracial and intercultural family in Malawi in which her grandfather was a Presbyterian minister, his brother was a Muslim imam and others practiced traditional African religions. Moreover, members of her family, she said, were of Indian, European and African descent. Her own personal and cultural household was thus rich with diversity.

Phiri enumerated a diverse range of challenges facing the household of God today, from human trafficking, rape and other forms of violence against women to the participation of women in the church to economic and social inequality to the dangers of migration to violent conflicts to the degradation of the environment. One of the greatest challenges she described, however, is inside the household of God itself.

“While previously the ecumenical movement focused on bringing the churches together to deal with interdenominational issues that hindered the unity of the church, today the landscape has changed.”

“The ecumenical movement is forced to deal with divisions within churches over exclusion and discrimination on the basis of race, caste, gender, HIV and AIDS and sexual orientation. Mostly, it is about moral discernment in the household of God. How do we live together in such a way that no one is made to feel that they are aliens in the household of God?”

Phiri concluded her lecture by reminding the delegates that one of the outcomes of the WCC General Assembly in 2013 was an invitation to Christians and people of good will from everywhere to join in a pilgrimage of justice and peace with the themes of peace-building, economic justice, climate change and social justice informed by spirituality, formation and theological reflection.

“The elements of this pilgrimage are spiritual, contextual and transformational... I now extend this invitation once more to you to deliberate on how you are going to make this pilgrimage of justice and peace a reality in your context.”





CCA delegates visit HKBP Serpong, local congregations



On Sunday, delegates of the 14th general assembly simultaneously attended worship services in various local congregations in Jakarta organized by the Local Arrangement Committee, which revealed the strong and growing Christian community in Indonesia.

Some delegates served as preachers while some delivered special songs at the worship, which coincided with the Pentecost Sunday.

In HKBP Serpong, Rev. Andrew Norton, a CCA delegate from the Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa in New Zealand, delivered the homily reflecting on Acts 2:22-38. He said “The coming of Holy Spirit was delivered for us to peel off our old skin and change it anew by the forgiveness of our sins. The Holy Spirit also took us out of the narrow Egypt and now sends us out to the ends of the earth.”

On behalf of the congregation, Rev. Leonard Sigalinging, HKBP Serpong Chairman, and Elder Jupiter Sitorus delivered welcome greetings and thanked the participants who blessed them with their presence. Visitors were given “ulos batak”, a traditional scarf from Batak culture, which were placed on their shoulder as gesture of love and welcome.

A discussion over lunch fellowship with the church organizations concluded the event, which inspired the idea of launching a Church Youth Exchange Program in the future.



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Padi Rex shared 14th General Assembly of the Christian Conference of Asia's photo.
22 hrs · Edited · 🗨

The members of the presidium and the general secretary (second from left) try their skill on the angklung. (Van Arunrasmey of Cambodia, Padi Rex of Philippines, K.B. Rokaya of Nepal and Retno Ngapon of Indonesia)



Pentecost on the Street: A Solidarity Visit to GKI Yasmin & HKBP Filadelfia Congregations



By Ismael Fisco Jr.

The scorching heat though as if symbolic of a real Pentecostal occurrence intensified the experience of CCA delegates as they attended worship services with various local congregations in Jakarta on Sunday.

While most of participants were hosted in beautiful churches that revealed the hospitality of Christian community in the city, some delegates chose to do a solidarity visit to Gereja Kristen Indonesia (GKI) Yasmin and Huria Kristen Batak Protestan (HKBP) Filadelfia congregations who conducted their worship service on the street facing the President's Palace of Indonesia.

Around 100 people gathered in the area for the liturgical service that calls for religious freedom in relation to the struggle of the said congregations in Bogor and Bekasi, West Java, which remain without a place for worship after their church was closed down due to cited objections from residents. The dispute started in 2010 when the local government refused to enforce the Supreme Court order to re-open the church and the Ombudsman's recommendation not to hinder religious activities in the church, which had sparked conflict between the group and the local government affecting the community.

In a statement, Mr. Bona Sigalingging, spokesperson of the

group said that "it's really a bad precedence for Indonesia where we already have Supreme Court's decision but the local government in Bogor and Bekasi does not want to follow it. We keep doing this as a reminder to the government that it has the constitutional obligation to make sure that any part of Indonesia will follow the law and constitution whatever is the background of its citizen."

"The presence of CCA today is very relevant. Although we have already been doing this with other interfaith friends, the support and presence of our brother and sisters from other churches in Asia supporting us deeply makes us feel that we are not alone. This is our common struggle together to get justice and to maintain peace with people who come from different religious background, especially in countries where Christianity is a minority."

Rev. Suatami Sutedja the speaker during the worship service said that the activity is a Pentecostal experience for them: "The Holy Spirit is present in the midst of our struggle. It gave us the gift of language and communication so we can talk and share our stories with others."

The worship concluded with solidarity messages of CCA delegates who brought greetings of solidarity from their own churches and countries.

SARASEHAN is the official newsletter of the 14th General Assembly of CCA. We welcome suggestions and contributions at cca_media@pgi.or.id

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PGI Extends Support to Earthquake Victims in Nepal



In the highlight of its 65th anniversary celebration, the Indonesian Communion of Churches (PGI) extended its financial support to the victim survivors of earthquake through the delegates from Nepal who are currently attending the CCA 14th general assembly.

“PGI launched its fundraising for Nepal as a form of concern and an act of solidarity among fellow human beings,” said PGI Chairman Rev. Dr. Henriette-Lebang. The anniversary celebration was held on Sunday, May 24th at the Ancol Eco Park Convention Center, bearing the theme “Oneness in Action: Building a Household of God.”

Dr. Henriette also said that “Disaster victims in Nepal become a serious concern for PGI as the whole congregation in attendance all took action to care by raising funds.” She announced that the organization collected a total amount

of Rp 19 million.

“The donation we immediately handed over to representatives from Nepal who happened to be attending the assembly. We hope that such assistance can help and be useful for victims in Nepal,” Dr. Henriette added.

The anniversary celebration was also graced by Indonesia Minister for Transportation Mr. Ignatius Jonan. In his speech he claimed “I am happy to be present in the midst of the anniversary celebration of PGI. This event is a timely celebration to keep the fellowship and unity of Christian churches.”

The anniversary celebration of PGI coincided with the 14th general assembly of CCA whose delegates attended the said event characterized by liturgical worship and cultural presentations from PGI members.