



Asian Church Today

*A newsletter of the
Evangelical Fellowship of Asia*

2007

Private Circulation

7th Advocates Asia Conference

“...And what does the LORD require of you?

To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God”

Micah 6:8

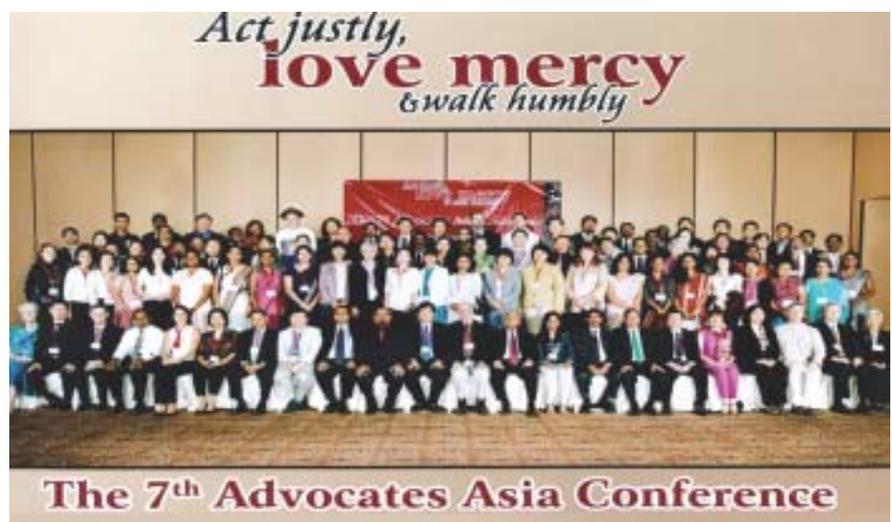
One hundred and ten Christian lawyers, judges, law professors and law students from 19 Asian countries met under this banner, for the 7th Advocates Asia Conference, in Colombo Sri Lanka. The three day Conference which was held from the 18th – 20th of October was organized by the National Christian Evangelical Alliance of Sri Lanka (NCEASL) and the Evangelical Fellowship of Asia (EFA).

The conference is a forum where legal professionals gather together to share and learn about living out our Christian faith in the professional arena of law. The EFA invited national Alliances from Asia to send Christian lawyers from each nation to this conference. It was a joy to welcome participants from Bangladesh and the Philippines – both countries which have not been represented at Advocates Asia in previous years.

In a world where violence, injustice, corruption and hunger for power at any cost are the norm, the cry of Habakkuk is echoed in many Asian nations today, “Destruction and violence are before me; there is strife, and conflict abounds. Therefore the law is paralyzed, and justice never prevails. The wicked hem in the righteous, so that justice is perverted” (Habakkuk 1: 3 – 4).

In such a world, what is the role of the Christian Lawyer? Very often, the Christian lawyer is tempted to separate his Christian faith from his profession; turning a blind eye to injustice and ignoring the suffering of others rather than deviate from the norm.

The 7th Advocates Asia Conference was devoted to grappling with these challenges and the responsibility of the Christian lawyer to impact society in the areas of human rights, peace reconciliation, ethics, justice and good governance. The sessions





were taught by eminent and respected legal professionals from Asia, focusing on issues of regional importance.

The inauguration was a colourful affair, with traditional Sri Lankan dancers and drummers leading the guests. The traditional ceremonial opening followed, where the special guests were invited to light a lamp, signifying the inauguration of the conference. After a time of praise and worship, Mr. Godfrey Yogarajah, General Secretary of the Evangelical Fellowship of Asia and the National Christian Evangelical Alliance of Sri Lanka welcomed the participants and guests.

The inaugural message was delivered by Dr. Ajith Fernando from Sri Lanka, who based his inspiring and challenging address on the conference theme ‘Act justly, love mercy and walk humbly’.

The first session was delivered by Justice C. G. Weeramantry (Sri Lanka), former Vice President of the International Courts of Justice who spoke of the rights of future generations and our responsibility to act justly in protecting and preserving both resources and rights for the future.

Justice W. A. Shishak (India) spoke on a topic which all Christian lawyers have grappled with at one time or another ‘Professional Responsibility and Christian Conviction: A conflict of Interests?’.

A session on integrity and ethics was conducted by Mr. Timothy Klenk (USA), who is a Board Member of Advocates International.

Mr. Rohan Edrisinhe from the Faculty of Law, University of Colombo, Sri Lanka, spoke on the subject of ‘Law, Justice and Good governance: Challenges in Asia’, which was followed by a lively discussion.

1. OPENING CEREMONY - LIGHTING THE TRADITIONAL OIL LAMP. 2. & 3. SESSIONS IN PROGRESS. 4. LAW STUDENTS' MOOT COMPETITION. 5. SIGNING THE PETITION ON BEHALF OF IMPRISONED VIETNAMESE CHRISTIAN LAWYERS 6. DELEGATES DRESSED IN NATIONAL DRESS AT CLOSING CEREMONY

In addition to the above mentioned sessions, there were 5 specialized workshops.

1. 'Religious Freedom: Challenges and Responses', conducted by Mr. Min Choon Lee (Malaysia) & Mr. Robin David (India).
2. 'Human Rights Beyond Borders: The Refugee Crisis in Asia', conducted by Mr. Jae Chung Won (S. Korea) & Ms. Yara Hussain (Jordan)
3. 'Minority Rights: Politics or Justice', conducted by Mr. M. A. Sumanthiran (Sri Lanka) & Mr. Ronald D'sa (India)
4. 'Equality before the law: Making justice accessible to the poor' conducted by Ms. Sue-Ellen Hollyok (Australia) & Mr. Gregory Vijayendran (Singapore)
5. A special workshop on 'Asian Hot Spots', focusing on nations where there are intense human rights violations or persecution conducted by Ms. Roshini Wickremesinhe (Sri Lanka) & Mr. Gregory Vijayendran (Singapore), where the participants spent time in prayer for each of the nations highlighted, including Burma, Iraq and Vietnam.

A special feature of this workshop was the initiation of a signature campaign with a letter of appeal addressed to the Prime Minister of Vietnam, on behalf of two Vietnamese Christian lawyers who are serving prison terms. Mr. Van Dai and Miss Cong Nhan, both Christian human rights lawyers have appeared on behalf of persecuted Christians in the past, including the Mennonite Six.

The daily Devotional Messages were shared by Rev. Dr. Tissa Weerasinghe, Senior Pastor of the Calvary Church, Colombo and Mr. Ivor Poobalan, Principal of the Colombo Theological Seminary.

The 2nd Asian Christian Law Students Moot Competition was held concurrently with the conference. Teams from S. Korea, the Philippines and Sri Lanka participated. After two days of intense and tough competing, the Sri Lankan team was adjudged



PRAYING FOR ASIAN NATIONS IN TURMOIL

the winners. The runners up were the team from the Philippines.

The times of fellowship spent with fellow legal professionals from other nations was appreciated by all. New friendships were forged and old friendships were renewed.

There was time set apart for sightseeing and fun too. On the first day the participants were treated to a tour of Colombo City and shopping. At the end of the Conference, those who wished to see more of Sri Lanka were taken on sightseeing tours to the Citadel of Kandy where the Palace of the last King of Sri Lanka stands. En-route, they also visited the National Botanical Gardens and the world's only elephant orphanage.

The 7th Advocates Asia Conference came to a close with the Closing Ceremony on the night of the 20th of October, at the beautiful California Grill Roof Top Restaurant, overlooking the Indian Ocean and the City of Colombo. The colourful national costumes heightened the festive atmosphere. The Handong Law School Choir filled the air with angelica music. Later in the night, a band led by a Sri Lankan Christian Lawyer entertained the gathering with some very lively western and Sri Lankan music.

"Through this Conference, I no longer felt that I am a single advocate who practices in one of the corner of the court, but I have a very good backing locally, regionally, nationally and globally - apart from the Lord's support. I can do great things through Jesus Christ who strengthens me", said one Lawyer from India. His words summarize the purpose of Advocates Asia.

The Fourth Seminar of the Asian Movement for Christian Unity (AMCU IV)

11 to 14 JUNE 2007 - KUALA LUMPUR
Joint Statement



THE FOURTH SEMINAR OF THE ASIAN MOVEMENT FOR CHRISTIAN UNITY

The Fourth seminar of the Asian Movement for Christian Unity (AMCU IV) was held from 11 to 14 June 2007 at the Archdiocesan Pastoral Centre of Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. 24 participants, representing the Christian Conference of Asia (CCA), the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences (FABC), and the Evangelical Fellowship of Asia (EFA), took part. Earlier AMCU seminars (Hong Kong, 1995; Bali, 1997; Chiang Mai, 2001) were jointly sponsored and organized by CCA and FABC. The participation by representatives of EFA in AMCU IV was the result of discussions carried out at the Asian chapter of the Global Christian Forum in Bangkok from 21-23 September 2006.

The theme of AMCU IV was "Our Common Witness in Contemporary Asia" and focused on the importance of Christians of all Churches and Christian communities to be united in responding to the social, political, and religious realities of Asia today. The participants shared their personal faith journeys and then examined the possibilities of joint Christian witness of faith in the context of the social

challenges of injustice and discrimination and in the milieu of Asia's religious and cultural plurality.

The participants agreed that Christian commitment must lead the Christian Churches in Asia to take a prophetic stand against any form of discrimination, such as that of caste, class, race, and gender, as being incompatible with the teaching of the Gospel. God's message to humankind, as enunciated by the prophets and expressed in God's word in Jesus Christ, affirms the equal human dignity of all people and condemns as sinful those human attitudes and deeds that oppress and discriminate among persons.

The common witness that Christians are called to make against patterns of oppression includes self-examination and self-criticism to become more aware of the ways in which sinful structures have also become engrained in the life of Christian communities in Asia. To be credible, Christians must oppose injustice and exploitation, not only when the victims are themselves Christian, but also in those instances where those who suffer discrimination are the followers of other religions or of no religion, and

in cases where the perpetrators of injustice are fellow Christians. Christian witness, based on the Gospel imperative of loving service to others, must focus on the needs of the most vulnerable such as victims of natural calamities, oppressive regimes, and all forms of degradation of human life and should confront problems like global warming and other environmental concerns.

Faced with the multiplicity of religions in contemporary Asia, the participants of AMCU IV sought to define some elements of common Christian witness. Faith in Jesus Christ must be proclaimed in full respect for the beliefs and practices of others. Witness to Christian faith should never be carried out by putting down or denigrating the faith of others. Genuine Christian witness understands faith in Christ to be liberation from patterns of human sinfulness and which arises from a free and joyful response to God's grace.

In the light of the various challenges facing the churches, the participants call upon the component bodies (CCA, FABC, and EFA) to address together the following concerns. One challenge is that of forming Christian youth in a commitment to build Christian unity. A second challenge is that of making our parish communities and pastors to be focal points for deeper involvement in the search for full visible

Christian unity.

The three bodies can concretely promote Christian unity by getting to know one

another better through mutual discussions and invitations to assemblies and plenary sessions, by engaging in joint projects such as the Asia Conference of Theological Students and the Congress of Asian Theologians and by undertaking joint actions such as summer camps for Christian unity for young people. Mutual cooperation and activities at national and local levels are also to be strongly encouraged.

The participants expect to hold the next seminar for the Asian Movement for Christian Unity (AMCU V) in the middle of 2009.

Christian Conference of Asia
Federation of Asian Bishops Conferences
Evangelical Fellowship of Asia
Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

Witness to Christian faith should never be carried out by putting down or denigrating the faith of others

EFA launches Asian IT Centre

In January 2007, an Asian IT Centre was set up by EFA, with the assistance of the WEA IT Commission to provide IT solutions to the Asian Alliances. The Commission was inaugurated in Colombo Sri Lanka.

This initiative will help improve communications capability of individual national Alliances through web based training, resources, internet, e-mail facilities and web sites.

Several Asian Alliances which did not have web sites were provided with the facility of having their own sites – Mongolia, Myanmar, Pakistan and Nepal.



THE EFA IT COMMISSION MEMBERS AT THE INAUGURATION WITH THE EFA GENERAL SECRETARY

Stop Violent Repression of Burma's Peaceful Protesters

Statement issued by the Evangelical Fellowship of Asia

It is with deep anguish and shock that we learn of the violent attack on Buddhist monks and civilians who were engaged in a peaceful protest in Burma during the past week. We are appalled by the violent repression of unarmed protesters by the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC) and the



subsequent raids on Buddhist temples, rounding up Buddhist monks and activist.

We condemn this brutal attack on religious leaders and civilians. We call upon Burma's military government to bring an immediate end to this bloody crackdown and to pursue a path of peaceful dialogue towards democratic governance.

We express our deep sorrow and condolences to the families of those who were killed by the SPDC, including the Japanese journalist who was shot while

covering the protest. We pray for the civilians and Buddhist monks who suffered physical injury during the police crackdown. We stand with those prisoners of conscience who have been arrested and incarcerated for expressing their views through peaceful demonstrations.

Burma today stands at a very crucial juncture in its history.

We believe this is a time that can bring about a peaceful and prosperous future for Burma

Burma today stands at a very crucial juncture in its history. We believe this is a time that can bring about a peaceful and prosperous future for Burma. Towards this end, we hope and pray that the government of General Than Shwe will take substantial steps to usher in a climate of justice and equality.

We call upon Burma's military government to actively promote national reconciliation and unity, while desisting from violent repression of her citizens.

We call upon the international community, particularly ASEAN countries to step up efforts to bring an end to violence in Burma and persuade the Burmese military government to initiate a peaceful transition towards democracy for Burma's people.



Photographs courtesy the Internet

Global Christian Forum

Limuru, Nairobi, Kenya 2007

The Global Christian Forum (GCF) brought together more than 240 key Christian leaders from around the world, including the International Director of the World Evangelical Alliance, Dr. Geoff Tunnicliffe; the Chairman of the Evangelical Fellowship of Asia Rev. Dr. Sang Bok David Kim; the General Secretary of the Evangelical Fellowship of Asia, Mr. Godfrey Yogarajah; General Secretary of the World Council of Churches, the Rev Samuel Kobia; Chairman of the Pentecostal World Fellowship, Dr. James Legget; the President of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches, Rev. Dr. Clifton Kirkpatrick; and the head of the Baptist World Alliance, Dr. Neville Callam.

They issued a joint message from Christian leaders worldwide during this Forum, which took place in Nairobi, Kenya, from 6 to 9 November 2007.

The message welcomed the “unprecedented opportunity” afforded by the Forum to share reflections on the theme “Our Journey with Jesus Christ, the Reconciler”, and reiterated the GCF’s mission to “create an open space” where Christians from across a wide range of Christian communities and inter-church organisations could reflect together on issues of common concern.

It states: “Recognising that unity is first and foremost God’s gift through the work of the Holy Spirit, our intent is to go forward together promoting greater understanding and cooperation among Christians, while respecting and upholding the diversity of our identities, traditions and individual gifts.” (cf 1 Cor 12).

The joint message committed delegates to continue with the process within the Global Christian Forum, stating, “We will pray and work for local and regional events, as well as other possible global encounters, to deepen this journey.”



EFA CHAIRMAN REV. SANG BOK DAVID KIM AND EFA GENERAL SECRETARY GODFREY YOGARAJAH

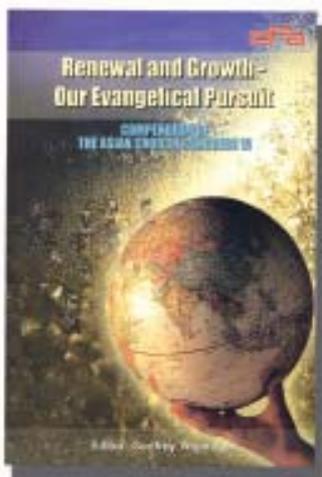
“Recognising that unity is first and foremost God’s gift through the work of the Holy Spirit, our intent is to go forward together promoting greater understanding and cooperation among Christians, while respecting and upholding the diversity of our identities, traditions and individual gifts.”

Dr. Tunnicliffe expressed his appreciation of the message’s commitment to Trinitarian Christian truth and its clarity about the humanity and deity of Christ. “Our presence at this Forum is testimony to the long-standing commitment of Evangelicals, since the inception of the global Evangelical Alliance movement in 1846, to Christ-like cooperation with the various denominations and traditions that make up the body of Christ. This Forum was and will continue to be an opportunity to create greater understanding, dispel stereotypes and promote greater religious liberty,” he said.

The World Evangelical Alliance also held its annual international council and leadership meetings in conjunction with the GCF. A significant number of leaders from national Evangelical Alliances and other WEA members were also present.

Upcoming Events

Asian Missions Congress & the EFA General Assembly
4th to 8th August in India



Compendium of the Asian Church Congress

The Compendium of the 6th Asian Church Congress is available for purchase.

Please contact us at efa@slt.net.lk to order.
US\$20 per copy, plus shipping and handling.

**** Special rate for EFA Members –
US\$10 per copy, plus shipping and handling.**

Meeting of International Partner Agencies working with the Persecuted Church



EFA GENERAL SECRETARY WITH OTHER REPRESENTATIVES AT THE MEETING.

In August 2007, leaders from International Agencies working with the persecuted Church worldwide met together for a historical meeting, to formulate a code of Best Practices for such agencies. This meeting, held in Toronto, Canada, was a follow up to a previous meeting held in Amsterdam, a few months earlier.

Agencies present included Christian Solidarity Worldwide, Jubilee Campaign, Open Doors, Voice of the Martyrs and others. EFA General Secretary, Mr. Godfrey Yogarajah was invited to attend the meeting, where he shared the experiences of the Asian Church and also codes of best practices used by the Evangelical Alliance of Sri Lanka.

Published by

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