

Foreword

The Church is called to carry out the Mission of God and to be engaged in the continuation of Christ's earthly ministry. The Gospel reveals to us the purpose of Christ's coming into the world and his mission of bearing the prophetic witness to the Truth, on the basis of the vision of the kingdom of God. The vast and rapid changes warrant the Church in every situation to be engaged in the search for contextual relevance in the participation in God's Mission.

Asia Mission Conference

The Asia Mission Conferences (AMC), organised by the Christian Conference of Asia (CCA), have been integral to the life and witness of the Asian ecumenical movement. Those Mission Conferences, organised by the CCA in the past, have greatly helped Asian churches in their efforts for the contextualisation of missiological convictions and theological articulations in the emerging Asian contexts. Those great attempts of the CCA, assisted the churches and the ecumenical movement in Asia in their search for diverse voices and encounters to understand relevant missiological emphasis and new vision, while being engaged in God's mission in Asia. It is imperative that church leaders, ecumenists, theologians, missiologists, exegetes, missionaries, and representatives of mission agencies and organisations within Asia and beyond come together for discussion and reflection on mission and ecumenical commitment, in our common journey. The AMC-2017 is yet another very significant attempt of the CCA, to offer a common space, almost a quarter of a century after the last AMC held in Seoul, South Korea, in 1994. The theme of the AMC-2017 is, 'Journeying Together: Prophetic Witness to the Truth and Light, in Asia'.

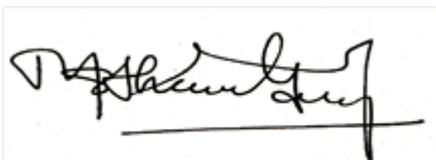
CCA @ 60: Diamond Jubilee

While being engaged in its mission and witness, the CCA has been journeying to fulfil its mandates of serving and enriching the churches in Asia, contributing significantly to the nurturing and strengthening of ecumenical vision and mission in Asia. The CCA, founded in 1957, is

completing its 60 years of ecumenical journey. On this occasion, the CCA expresses profound thanks to God Almighty who graciously guided and greatly enabled CCA's mission and witness during the past six decades. The CCA's Diamond Jubilee will be commemorated during the AMC, on Sunday, 15 October 2017, in Yangon, Myanmar. The theme of the Diamond Jubilee, as well as of the Asia Sunday-2017, will be the same as that of the AMC: 'Journeying Together: Prophetic Witness to the Truth and Light, in Asia'.

We call upon all member churches, councils and all other partners of the CCA to observe Asia Sunday on 15 October 2017 in the most befitting way and to pray specially for the CCA.

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.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mathews George Chunakara', written over a horizontal line.

Mathews George Chunakara
General Secretary, CCA

Asia Mission Conference

Introduction

The Asia Mission Conferences, organised by the Christian Conference of Asia (CCA), have been integral to the life and witness of the Asian ecumenical movement. Ever since its founding in 1957, the CCA, previously known as the East Asia Christian Conference (EACC), has been actively involved in the reflections on, articulations of, and engagements in, the mission and evangelism of Asian churches. Pioneering missiological perspectives, significant thrusts and fresh commitments have emerged through the Mission Conferences of the CCA. Theological and missiological reflections and studies initiated by the CCA at different times in history helped Asian churches to stimulate mission imperatives from time to time. The theme of the Asian Church Leaders' Conference held at Parapat, Indonesia in 1957, which paved way for the founding of the CCA, was about "The Common Evangelistic Task". The Parapat Conference, jointly sponsored by the World Council of Churches (WCC) and the International Missionary Council (IMC), was a seminal event in ecumenical history as it gave birth to the first Regional Ecumenical Organisation in the world. The interrelatedness of mission and ecumenism was affirmed emphatically, as the foundation of the CCA was laid by the stalwarts of the Asian ecumenical movement. The themes selected for the CCA Assemblies subsequently also were focused on the theological and missiological thrusts from the Asian perspectives. However, over the years, the sessions of the General Assemblies have proved inadequate to ensure substantial theological reflections and discussions in the midst of numerous other pressing matters and business sessions. For this reason, the CCA later started organising separate Asia Mission Conferences (AMC).

The two AMCs held in 1989 (Cipayung, Indonesia) and 1994 (Seoul, South Korea) were path-breaking events in the history of the CCA. Such initiatives helped the Asian churches and the mission partners from the West working in Asia to reflect on new missiological thrusts relevant in the emerging Asian contexts. However, the CCA has not been able to organise any AMCs since the last one held in 1994.

Over the past two decades, many new, vital issues in Asia's pluralistic and complex contexts have emerged. While engaging in mission and witness, the new concerns should have been invariably addressed by the churches in Asia, but those concerns have not been taken into consideration seriously. As a result, there exists a substantial, even alarming, vacuum in articulating the missiological issues in Asia in an ecumenical framework.

It is in this context that the CCA is initiating a Mission Conference with the main aim of deeply deliberating and reflecting on the inalienable mission of the churches in the emerging Asian contexts.

The Asia Mission Conference-2017 will be held from 11 to 17 October 2017 in Yangon, Myanmar. As the year 2017 is the 60th year of the founding of the CCA, the Diamond Jubilee celebrations of the Christian Conference of Asia will be held in conjunction with the AMC, on Sunday, 15 October 2017, in Yangon.

Objectives

The AMC is envisaged as a platform for Asian and non-Asian churches and related mission-partners from different continents to come together in Asia; to reflect and deliberate on the challenges of Asian realities, and to envision, articulate and enable relevant mission with ecumenical commitment, in Asia.

Asian churches, by and large, were founded by Western missionaries who were sent by their respective mission boards and mission agencies. Many churches in Asia have their historical roots and links with mission partners. Several of those mission boards or agencies, which once started their mission in Asia, are still active in their partnership with various Asian churches. Some mission agencies or organisations have field offices, field representatives or area desk officers who are in contact with their respective partner churches in Asia. Some of them are still extending financial support to certain Asian churches. However, such engagements often limit their partnership in mission within the denominational or confessional boundaries without ecumenical commitments or priorities.

The AMC-2017 would provide a platform for genuine discussions on, and a profound analysis of the theological and missiological issues to be addressed in today's Asian context.

Trusting in God, the AMC-2017 is envisioned, planned and organised as an epoch-making event that will powerfully help to re-vitalise the churches and the ecumenical movement. The AMC will provide opportunities for Asian churches and the ecumenical movement to look back, repent, re-energise and re-dedicate themselves to be further deeply engaged in Mission – in 'Journeying Together demonstrating its Prophetic Witness to the Truth and Light, in Asia', The AMC-2017 will provide platforms for reflective, deliberative and celebrative processes; and also will call for innovative and courageous engagements in Mission in today's Asian contexts, at the national and regional levels, as well as the church and ecumenical levels.

Precise understanding of, and meaningful response to, the context are critically important as this historic event, AMC-2017, gives appropriate and valuable directions for Asian churches' missional involvement.

The individual and joint, church-level, local and trans-border endeavours are hoped to culminate in the Asia Mission Conference-2017, and it, in turn, to blossom into a great 'Sending Out' Event – which will be the inauguration of A New Age in Christian Witness and Mission in Asia.

Mission of the Church in Asia

The Mission of the Church in emerging Asian context is becoming more significant. The re-definition of Mission and re-formulation of its agenda, on the basis of a profound re-understanding of the life and ministry of our Lord Jesus Christ relevant and meaningful in the Asian context, should be the prime agenda of the Church in Asia. While engaging in mission, Asia's pluralistic context of religions and cultures should be a matter of high priority for the Church in Asia.

As a new human family, by becoming a symbol and servant of God's reign, the task of the Church is to ultimately lead the humankind and the cosmos into God's reign. Mission of the Church is to enter into the process of partnering in the reign of God and furthering its movement towards the end-time community.

The role of the Church, while journeying together, is to be meaningfully engaged in the mission of prophetic witness to the Truth and Light, in order to make God's love present and effective in all contexts, without any hidden motives. Identifying mission as an instrument for Church growth or expansion of denominational and confessional interests of certain groups should not be the aim of mission. As a community engaged in mission, proclaiming God's reign, the Church should be a living community making visible the primacy of God and pre-eminence of God's reign and love.

The theme

The theme of the AMC-2017 is, '**Journeying Together: Prophetic Witness to the Truth and Light, in Asia**'.

This theme resonates with the contemporary situation in Asia and in the world. As the world faces grave realities, the theme 'Prophetic Witness to the Truth and Light' will be greatly helpful for reflecting on the Christian witness in the midst of adverse realities, and to emphasise the hope and trust in God's promises.

The theme is based on the Biblical verses from the Gospel of St. John:

- *"I have come into the world—to bear witness to the truth."* (John 18:37).
- *"I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me, will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."* (John 8:12).

The significance of this theme is also that it is linked to the role and relevance of the CCA in the Asian context, especially when it celebrates its journey of 60 years. The CCA, as an instrument of God, working on behalf of the Asian churches, is called to bear prophetic witness in Asia.

The prophetic witness to the Truth is on the basis of the vision of the kingdom of God, Jesus proclaimed. The truth in this context implies that the ultimate freedom and liberation is for all God's people and the entire cosmos; it is the essence of the message of the Gospel. In the Old Testament, the people of Israel were journeying towards the fulfilment of the promise that in Abraham all the nations of the earth shall be blessed. In Christ, this promise is fulfilled when, he made the two groups one, and destroyed the barrier, "the dividing wall of hostility" (Eph 2:14) as Jesus

embraced the Jew and the Gentile and established a new covenant. The Church, called to embrace both Jew and Gentile as “people of God” (1 Peter 2:9-10), is a community of prophets chosen to continue to uphold the values of the new covenant, who could partake in the promise of the new covenant (Hebrews 9:15).

The Gospel, Jesus proclaimed, was the reign of God. In his mission for the realisation of the reign of God, Jesus identified with the sinners, the poor, the lowly and the marginalised; he stood undoubtedly for the Truth and confronted courageously the dominant powers and structures. While challenging the norms which prevailed then, proclaiming the Truth to the powers and authorities, Jesus’ actions brought conflicts with the powerful ones, which ultimately led to his crucifixion and death on the cross. This powerfully declares that the mission of the Church is not confined to comfort zones. It is an invitation to live a life of costly discipleship, to witness boldly, standing on the side of the Truth, and to be 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. Jesus 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. The Church, as an instrument of prophetic witness to the Truth, and the Christians, as his loyal people, are called to be engaged in mission in obedience to the will of God, to transform the world. As the prophetic witness of Jesus continues to challenge and motivate, the Church has a task to re-envision its mission contextually and actualise it in history, with the power of the Holy Spirit.

It is in this context that the AMC–2017 is conceived and organised.

Sub-Themes

The four sub-themes developed within the broad framework of the main theme cover the thematic thrusts in the contemporary contexts of Mission. They are:

- *Prophetic Accompaniment* (Ref. Isaiah 61: 1-2, Matthew 25: 35-40, Micah 6: 8);
- *Affirming the Servanthood* (Ref. Matthew 20: 28, Luke 17: 7-10, Luke 24: 27);
- *Re-discovering the Kingdom Values* (Ref. Romans 12: 2, Matthew 5: 17-20); and
- *Embodying the Spirituality of the Cross* (Ref. Matthew 16: 24, Philippians 2:5-8, Luke 6: 35, Hebrews 12:1-3).

Areas of Mission Concerns in Asia

The Church in Asia is in the midst of numerous problems in the continent. And in such a context the Church is called to be prophetic, while being engaged in God's mission.

Although the issues are numerous, six most pertinent and specific areas of concerns have been identified for deeper missional involvement by Asian churches:

- **Groaning of Creation: Stewardship** (Climate change, ecological crisis, water related issues, etc.);
- **People on the Move: Embracing the Stranger** (Migrants, Refugees, Migrant Workers, IDPs, Diasporas, Street Children, Human Trafficking, Sex Trafficking, etc.);
- **The Excluded and the Marginalised: Accompanying People and Communities** (Gender, Women and Children, Addiction and Mental Health, Indigenous People, etc.);
- **Economic Injustice: Prophetic Witnessing** (Poverty, Intensifying Systemic Injustice, Financialisation, Money Power, Technology and Digitisation as Tools for the Building-up of Empire, etc.);
- **Religious Intolerance: Nurturing Interfaith Harmony** (Politicisation of Religions, Fundamentalism and Extremism, etc.); and
- **Geo-Political Turmoil: Building Peace** (Militarisation, Arms Race, Territorial Disputes, Nuclearisation, Proxy Wars, Scramble for Natural Resources, etc.).

AMC - Flow of the Programme *Daily Sessions*

- Morning Worship;
- Bible Studies in Groups;
- Thematic presentations at plenary sessions;
- Panel presentations on specific issues at plenary sessions;
- Group discussions in small working groups; and
- Evening Worship.

❖ Spiritual Life in the Asia Mission Conference

Spiritual life will be one of the most important components of the AMC, especially through morning and evening worships, as well as Bible Studies.

➤ Worships

A specially assigned worship committee, with the assistance of selected specialists of liturgy and music, belonging to different confessional backgrounds from Asian countries, is engaged in the preparation of the worship resources and training of a special team to conduct worships. A local worship organising committee has also been formed and talented singers and musicians are selected for the choir that will assist the worship preparation teams.

➤ Bible studies

The four Bible Studies and the four Theme Presentations will be based on each one of the four Sub-Themes. Bible Studies will take place in 20 groups under the leadership of specially identified Bible Study facilitators.

➤ Thematic Presentations

There will be four thematic presentations during the fore-noon plenary sessions.

❖ Panel presentations

Panel presentations will take place during the plenary sessions on the topics

1. Nurturing of Inter-Religious Harmony amidst Growing Intolerances;
2. Groaning of Creation and Economic Injustice: Prophetic Witness;
3. Embracing the Stranger and accompanying the Marginalised; and
4. Building peace and overcoming conflicts.

❖ **Discussions in Groups**

Group Discussions will take place every afternoon which will provide opportunities for participants to share their views and experiences, based on the various presentations and Bible Studies. The discussions will aim at stimulating theological and missiological understanding on the Mission of the Church and its manifestations amidst contemporary Asian situations.

❖ **Mission Exhibition**

A Mission Exhibition will be organised during the Asia Mission Conference as a special component of the Programme. The Mission Exhibition will be yet another opportunity for reflecting on the relevant mission in Asia today. The exhibitions are meant not just for 'exhibiting' certain mission enterprises and efforts, but to convey a higher level of communication on the meaning and essence of the mission of the churches in different contexts and situations. It is hoped that such engagements between the visitors to exhibition stalls/booths, and the promoters/facilitators of the exhibition will enable them to improve and build on their Mission perspectives. In other words, the Exhibition is expected to become a centre of learning, unlearning and re-learning, and to inspire the visitors and organisers to re-dedicate themselves to take up mission ventures with a new imagination.

These exhibitions will be reflective of the six areas of mission concerns in Asia: 1) Groaning of Creation: Stewardship, 2) People on the Move: Embracing the Stranger, 3) The Excluded and the Marginalised: Accompanying People and Communities, 4) Economic Injustice: Prophetic Witnessing, 5) Religious Intolerance: Nurturing Inter-faith Harmony, and 6) Geo-political Turmoil: Building Peace.

- **Deadline for Registration of Exhibition Booths**

Churches, organisations and institutions are encouraged to organise Exhibitions related to their mission and witness involvements. Exhibition Booths will be allocated to those who apply for space for Exhibition Booths at the AMC venue.

Last date for Registration of Exhibition Booths: 15 July 2017.

- ❖ **CCA @ 60: Diamond Jubilee of the CCA**

The Christian Conference of Asia is completing six decades of its historic journey, serving and enriching the churches in Asia, and contributing significantly to the nurturing and strengthening of the ecumenical vision and mission in Asia.

- The Diamond Jubilee Celebrations of the CCA will be held towards the end of the AMC, on Sunday, 15 October 2017. Various programmes on that day will witness the commemoration of the Diamond Jubilee of the CCA. The participants in the AMC will worship in the morning with local communities in different congregations in Yangon.
- A Thanksgiving Service and a Public Meeting will be held in the afternoon with the participation of thousands of people from local congregations, CCA member churches and national and regional councils, representatives of global ecumenical organisations, and prominent national and global leaders. A short video documentary depicting the historic journey of the CCA will be screened during the event.
- Varieties of cultural presentations also will be part of the Diamond Jubilee Celebrations on 15 October.

- ❖ **Asia Sunday - 2017**

The Asia Sunday - 2017 will be observed on the same theme as that of the AMC – ‘Journeying Together: Prophetic Witness to the Truth and Light, in Asia’. CCA member churches and councils, as well as the partners of Asian churches worldwide will be encouraged to observe this year’s Asia Sunday on 15 October 2017 as a commemoration of the Diamond Jubilee of the CCA. Special Asia Sunday liturgy will be prepared and shared in advance.

❖ **Mission Study Groups**

As part of the preparations for the AMC, we call upon the CCA member churches and councils to initiate Mission Study Groups at the church level (both for the whole church and for local congregations), sub-regional and regional levels. These Mission Study Groups are intended to probe deeply into the mission that is revealed to us through the Word of God and the life and ministry of Jesus, and which is entrusted with us. These studies should invariably look at the mission engagements critically, understand the various dimensions of the present context clearly, and propose boldly relevant, meaningful and great mission involvements.

❖ **Mission Statement**

A Mission Statement on the basis of the AMC theme, 'Prophetic Witness to the Truth and Light, in Asia' will be adopted at the AMC. A drafting group will circulate the initial draft of the statement prior to the AMC and the final draft will be shaped during the AMC and presented towards the end of the AMC.

❖ **Local, Sub-Regional, Regional Programmes**

Various programmes – worships, prayers, studies and deeper deliberations on issues, joint celebrations and a renewal of the commitment of the mission – should be organised as a prelude to the AMC. These programmes are meant also to thank and praise God for choosing us to be partners in the mission of God in Asia, to widen the horizons of the mission, and to deepen the commitment to the mission.

❖ **Venue and Its Significance**

The AMC will be hosted by the Myanmar Baptist Convention (MBC) and coordinated locally by the Myanmar Council of Churches (MCC).

Myanmar remained a closed-door country for more than half a century. Churches in Myanmar have been undergoing traumatic experiences during the years of military dictatorship and isolation. Churches and Christians in the country have suffered tremendously. In a country where Theravada Buddhism has been enjoying the official patronage of the ruling military junta, Christians have suffered religious persecutions led by

fundamentalist Theravada Buddhist groups and innumerable cruelties inflicted by the military, although Christian mission in Myanmar has a history of more than two centuries of existence. Amidst on-going civil wars, ethnic strife, gross and systematic violations of human rights and denial of freedom of religion, churches in Myanmar have been faithfully engaged in mission and have been agents of peace with justice and reconciliation.

Today, the Church in Myanmar is very vibrant and actively participating in proclaiming the gospel. The Myanmar Baptist Convention (MBC), the host of the AMC, is spread all over the country. The MBC has more than 5000 congregations in different parts of the country. Although the Christians in Myanmar are economically disadvantaged, the MBC has come forward to host the AMC. They are engaged in generating substantial funds for hosting the AMC and for the Celebration of the Diamond Jubilee of the CCA. The other CCA member churches in Myanmar are also wholeheartedly participating in the preparations for hosting the AMC and the Diamond Jubilee celebrations of the CCA through the coordination of the Myanmar Council of Churches (MCC).

❖ **Participants**

About 400 delegates are expected to attend the Asia Mission Conference. They include:

- Heads of CCA member churches and councils
- Representatives of mission and evangelism departments of CCA member churches and councils;
- Missiologists and Theologians from seminaries and theological institutions in Asia;
- Representatives of mission partner organisations and churches from Europe, North America and other continents, that have historical partnership with churches in Asia;
- Representatives of international mission and ecumenical organisations;
- Representatives of the Roman Catholic Church – Federation of Asian Bishops Conferences (FABC);
- Representatives of Asian Evangelical Alliance (AEA);
- Representatives of Pentecostal churches in Asia;

- Representatives of the churches and theological institutions in Myanmar;
- Representatives of different religions (as speakers/observers); and
- Resource persons

❖ **Deadline for Registration**

Those who are nominated by respective churches/councils/organisation or interested in participating in the AMC should send their Registration Forms by 30 June 2017.