



Uniting Church in Australia
ASSEMBLY
Assembly Standing Committee

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Title	Global Christian Forum Meeting October 2022
Type of Paper (Information/Decision)	For information
Assembly or ASC Minute	Not applicable
Consultation	
Purpose	National Consultant Apwee Ting, travelled to Korea in October (10-17 October) to participate in the Global Christian Forum, Asian Regional Consultation, "Faithfulness in a Multi-Faith Context". He also connected with the Presbyterian Church in the Republic of Korea and the Presbyterian Church of Korea. The following is his report on these.
Rationale & Findings Summary	See report
Attachments	
Proposal/s	That the Assembly Standing Committee: 1. Receive the report on the Global Christian Forum meeting.
Submitted by	Apwee Ting Assembly National Consultant apweet@nat.uca.org.au

GLOBAL CHRISTIAN FORUM MEETING OCTOBER 2022

National Consultant Apwee Ting, travelled to Korea in October (10-17 October) to participate in the Global Christian Forum, Asian Regional Consultation, "Faithfulness in a Multi-Faith Context". He also connected with the Presbyterian Church in the Republic of Korea and the Presbyterian Church of Korea. The following is his report on these.

1. Meeting with the Presbyterian Church in the Republic of Korea (PROK)
2. Meeting with the Presbyterian Church of Korea (PCK)
3. Participating at Global Christian Forum, Asian Regional Consultation.

1. The Presbyterian Church in the Republic of Korea (PROK).

Rev Dr Chang Ju Kim, the General Secretary, and Rev Dr Sungkook Park, the Executive Secretary Partnership & Ecumenical Relationship were willing to meet me because of Sureka's letter (introducing me).

They even invited Rev Kisoo Jang (UCA minister served at PROK) who live three hours away from Seoul to join the meeting.

The conversation was friendly, open and constructive.

Here are some of important points from the meeting:

1. PROK has a long history of outreach, pastoral, welfare and social justice ministry. PROK has worked hard, especially in the past three years (Covid time) to support those in need financially, pastorally and emotionally.
2. PROK has a strong commitment in peace, environment and climate change.
3. During the last three years of the Covid situations, PROK had to learn to find new ways to carry out services and missions. Their theological foundation may not change much but their ecclesiological perspective has many different expressions (online worship etc).
4. One of the biggest challenges facing churches in Korea is how to sustain and nurture the next generation in faith and hope. Young people are less interested in church activities and leave faith-based institutions.
5. Urbanisation creates many new challenges in rural and regional and in social and communal structures.
6. PROK appreciated the partnership with UCA, and thanking UCA for looking after three of their ministers who served in Australia.
7. PROK hopes to strengthen the relationship with UCA, one of the suggestions is to exchange ministerial experiences through a short field placement.

Our conversation continued with meal together at a local Korean Restaurant,

I personally feel that UCA and PROK will continue to benefit both churches by strengthening the relationship.

2. The Presbyterian Church of Korea (PCK).

Again, the meeting was possible because of Sureka's letter to PCK.

I met Rev Bo Hyun Kim, the General Secretary (who just returned from London) and Rev Songhee Chai, the Ecumenical Coordinator.

Here are some points from the meeting:

1. Recognizing the important events that took place in 2019 when PCK and UCA commemorated the 130th anniversary of the Australian Mission in Korea.

Right after that, we had to face the new situation of the Covid-19; therefore very little contact between UCA and PCK over the past three years.

2. For PCK the image of Noah's Ark is an important metaphor. As was the story with Noah, we too have to experience a disconnect from the 'outside world because of covid'.

Therefore, the church must be wise to read and discern what are the signs and situations that happen in the 'outside world'.

3. There is a very deep generation gap between those who experienced great destruction and suffering after the war of the 1950's and the younger generation. There are different values of life, perspectives on social structures and responses to new challenges in 2022.

4. There are four important aspects of ministry: peace on the Korean peninsula, green ie environment, mentoring youth and freedom of expression in ministry (online worship etc).

5. Inter-generational and more recently, inter-cultural relationship are two important focuses for Korean churches as more and more foreigners work in Korea.

UCA and PCK as partners will continue to pray for each other and look forward to working together in many aspects of the church.

3. Global Christian Forum Asia Region Consultation on the topic of "Faithfulness in a multi-faith context".

Global Christian Forum (GFC) is a space where Christian communities gather to build relationships, broaden conversations, share faith-stories (talanoa), and foster mutual respect. It provides the opportunity for theological conversations and encounters in space of welcome and mutual friendship.

GFC makes a special effort to include Christian communities who have traditionally chosen not to join existing ecumenical bodies, including African instituted churches, independent churches, mega churches, charismatic movements, migrant and diaspora churches.

The forum in Seoul was held at Myung Sung Presbyterian Church (the largest Presbyterian Church in the world), attended by leaders from Myanmar, Nepal, Mongolia, Vietnam, India, Indonesia, Korea, Malaysia, Japan, Philippine, Syria, Romania, Thailand, Singapore, Lebanon, United States, United Kingdom, Germany, Poland, Switzerland, Canada, Kenya, Uganda, and Romania.

There are also representatives from WCC, Christian Conference of Asia. World Communion of Reformed Churches, the United Methodist Church, the Lutheran World Federation, Salvation Army, Roman Catholic, Syrian Orthodox, Pentecostal World Fellowship.

The three days meeting started with breakfast together at 6.30 am at the hotel, then travelling by bus to Myung Sung Church for morning devotion.

The days were full with sharing, discussions, building relationship and worship until 6.30 pm before we all returned back to the hotel for dinner.

Here are some points from GCF:

1. Asia is the world's largest population with the most diverse sociocultural context. Faithfulness in a Multi-faith Context is crucial in Asia. Asian Christians have lived peacefully alongside people of other faiths for centuries but have not always had the confidence in the gospel and humility to reimagine witness in non-western ways that would bring the gospel of Christ to life in this very diverse region.
2. In the last hundred years missiologist and church planters have believed that the Global South is the faster growing Christianity. We need to rethink this because until now there are only 8 percent of Christians in Asia. Christianity has also declined in several Asian countries due to political unrest, ethnic conflicts and refugees.
3. The Pentecostal and Charismatic Independence churches are growing in some part of Asia because they offer hope: by cutting across the boundary of gender, economic, social structure – all believers can get access to divine power; they also offer spiritual life – where there is no separation between matter, body and spirit.
4. Some traditional churches are also growing in Asia.
5. In some of Asian countries, there is little to do with the ecumenical movement – perhaps a matter of 'trusting each other' or 'mutual trust'.
6. The church does not respond to or include the diaspora community in the life and mission of the church
7. There has been much discussion about what mission and ecumenical relationship mean for Asian churches: What is Asian ecumenism like? What does ecumenical mean in the term of mission, where many Christians move from one church to another?
8. There is an awareness that most of churches in Asia still look like Western churches in the term of mission, ministry, theology etc.
9. Evangelism is about the transformation of all life, including all aspects of human life... the salvation of all life in humanity and creation. The life that flourishes is also in a multi religious context. Mission is dialogical. God is in dialogue ... giving and receiving grace in universal. Mission in dialogue means genuinely building relationships and friendships. Therefore, inter faith dialogue is sharing of prophetic voices in the multi religious context of Asia.
10. It is important to understand that there are at least three different ways to come together ecumenically:
 - a. In the west it starts with conceptual understanding to build relationships then experience together
 - b. In China and Korea starts with relationship to experience together then conceptual understanding

- c. In India it starts with experiencing together to build relationships then conceptual understanding.

My final reflection was on the question ‘what does this trip means for UCA?’

1. The relationship with our partner churches in Korea, particularly with PROK and PCK is very important, especially currently when geopolitical tensions are arising on Korea peninsula. Korean National Conference will play an important role in maintaining and strengthening these relations.
2. PROK has shown their willingness to explore the possibility of ministerial exchange and theological formations with UCA. Uniting World and ARU can look at this together and see how we negotiate with other councils responsible for field education and formation.
3. PROK and PCK would like to strengthen the partnership by visiting each other’s churches when time permits. Uniting World can discern if Assembly can invite PROK and PCK to the next Assembly meeting in 2024.
4. There are strong indications from the three world ecumenical bodies to engage with UCA:
 - a. World Communion of Reformed Churches.
I spoke with Rev Dr Hanns Lessing, Acting General Secretary of WCRC, and he keens to build a relationship with UCA. It was specifically mentioned that it will be great if UCA can participate at the WCRC meeting in Fiji, June 2023. He will send us the invitation.
 - b. The United Methodist Church.
I spoke at length with Bishop Rosemarie Wenner about UCA’s participating at UMC. Amelia Koh-Butler is the link for this relationship.
 - c. The Lutheran World Federation.
I also had good conversation with Prof Dr Dirk G. Lange, Assistant General Secretary for Ecumenical Relationship LWF and he was very interested in hearing about UCA and the Lutheran Dialogue in Australia. He gave me two books: From Conflict to Communion Lutheran-Catholic Common Commemoration of the Reformation in 2017, and The Lutheran World Federation’s Commitments on the Ecumenical Way to Ecclesial Communion.
5. I believe that keeping in touch with Global Christian Forum is important because this forum is a place where we can connect and hear from Pentecostal, Charismatic and Diaspora communities.
6. As we look at our future direction through Act2, it is important to look at how we connect, include and listen to/from/with First Peoples and the diaspora communities. Because for many of our members the starting point is about relationship and experience, not conceptual understanding.

I am very grateful for the opportunity that Assembly to trust me to participate at the GCF meeting and connect with PROK and PCK in Korea.

Thank you
Apwee

