

Statement from the Northeast Asia Area Council
10th Anniversary of the Accra Confession Consultation
9-11 September 2014, Taipei, Taiwan

Who we are

We are a fellowship of churches from Taiwan, Korea, Japan and Hong Kong who have met ten years after the Accra Confession was prophetically pronounced to receive and evaluate the relevance of the document in our respective countries and also in this region as a whole.

What we have done

We spent this time together to pray, to share communion and to understand the history of the Accra Confession. We read and reflected on the Confession in small groups, and we thought about how we can implement our findings in the local churches.

The Accra Confession declares that each of us should live "life in fullness" according to God's order, and we confess that we human beings have created obstacles to prevent that precious gift from our Creator to become reality. The Confession has been challenging us to acknowledge and live out that all of God's creation is designed to live in harmony.

We confess that the Accra Confession is still very unknown in our churches, and we need to do the job in each of our own churches to help deepen understanding and application of the Accra Confession.

However, we found that the Accra Confession is still very relevant and perhaps all the more so ten years later and specifically in our region as we can easily think of problematic examples in our countries which are related to the issues of economic injustice and ecological destruction, which are raised in principle in the Accra Confession.

We visited a community in Taipei which is the victim of unjust forced eviction. The land, the historical and cultural heritages and the people living on the land were unjustly uprooted solely for "economic development." We were reminded that similar situations abound in each of our countries as well.

What we should do

We noticed that although each country faces different issues with inclinations and nuances, many of the issues are not just isolated local events, but are interwoven as a region because of the nature of a globalized world.

While a globalized economy has brought its conveniences and advantages, it also clearly destabilized our regional economy and marginalized and alienated many people who are under the influence of this global system.

And because of its global nature it also makes every one of us complicit and entangled in the system. We need to raise awareness of and dig deeper into the workings of such global forces of oppression and exploitation, and we also desperately need to try and find ways to respond to it.

Territorial disputes are causing increased military tension in our region. Egoistic and one-sided interpretation of history taken by each country is also evoking political confrontations. Visible conflicts yield hatred, and governments and mass media seem to be intentionally feeding "self-serving" information. In some countries excessive manifestation of nationalism has shown up in forms of hate speech and xenophobia. As sisters and brothers in Christ in North East Asia, we are seriously concerned about the situation that puts peace among us under threat.

As a region, we find that migrant workers in Asia are the people economically exploited, socially marginalized and culturally alienated.

In each country, wage exploitation, racial discrimination and suppression of human rights have generated severe social problems. These issues are closely interconnected to economic justice.

Nuclear power is also endangering our region, as when disasters happen the impact cannot be confined to one country. And the promotion of it always is tied with an economic growth rhetoric. Nuclear power, as we learned from the Fukushima incident, is unstable, difficult to control, unclean and harmful to the entire creation. We, as churches which are against ecological injustice, need strong solidarity to work on these critical issues. And the relation between nuclear power and nuclear weapons should be further explored.

Aging and the gap between the generations have also become critical issues since the older generation has benefitted from the prosperity of the past, and the younger generation is suffering from the difficulty of finding stable jobs. We strongly believe that the church should play the role of bridging the generation gap and voicing the difficulties and struggles all generations are encountering.

Given that in this region Christians are a minority living in a multi-religious society, it is essential that we as Christians cooperate with other religions in addressing the issues raised by the Accra Confession. All people, regardless of beliefs, are impacted by the current economic and financial architecture. All bear a common responsibility as citizens to transform the injustices inherent in the system to ensure a social safety net to protect the weak, the disadvantaged, the young and the women in particular.

The culture of this region is predominantly patriarchal. Discrimination and gender violence, against both women and those in the LGBT community, remains widely tolerated. In a world community that is increasingly advocating for an "option for women" in tackling the challenges of poverty, illiteracy and low wages, North East Asia is relatively "rich" compared to most regions of the world. This region should therefore provide an example to the world in providing sexual, cultural and economic protection for all, especially those traditionally discriminated against. The churches should lead the way in this, advocating for appropriate legislation.

Concluding remarks

We are desperately in need of a specific action plan, mutual sharing and possibilities for solidarity as we try to disentangle the issues which are far more complicated and out of range of our meagre powers alone.

Nevertheless, we covenant that the renewal of our faith and the fullness of the gospel (fullness of life, justice and peace) in the church—which does not avoid the bearing of the cross—is vital for our collective witness in our societies.