



**Taiwan
Ecumenical
Forum**

台灣普世論壇

Co-Conveners: Rev. Dr. Christopher Ferguson (WCRC) and Rev. Dr. Collin Cowan (CWM)

ASIA PACIFIC KAIROS

A prophetic call to journey together with the PCT in pursuit of justice and peace for the people of Taiwan and the Asia-Pacific

Press Release 1

November 2018

Faith community urged to journey with people of Taiwan and its churches

[TAIPEI]: Preparations are well underway for the first meeting of the Taiwan Ecumenical Forum for Justice and Peace (TEF) to be held on 27 to 30 November 2018.

TEF is being hosted by the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan (PCT) at the Presbyterian Bible College in Hsinchu, Taiwan.

Some 140 participants from Taiwan, Asia-Pacific, Americas, Europe and other parts of the world are expected to attend the forum.

It will begin with an opening worship in the morning on 28 November. Rev Dr Collin Cowan, TEF co-convenor and general secretary of the Council for World Mission will be the preacher at the worship.

The President of Taiwan, H.E. Tsai Ing-wen, will bring her greetings to the gathering.

The three-day TEF program is designed to highlight contextual Bible studies, theological reflections, inputs from partner churches in Japan, Korea, Hong Kong and the Philippines, presentations on various topics, including Transitional Justice, Indigenous People, Taiwan's International Status, Broadening Ecumenism. Testimonies and reports also will be presented. The closing worship and closing formalities are scheduled to be held in the evening on 30 November. The preacher for the closing communion service will be Rev. Sandy Sneddon of the Church of Scotland.

As the voices of youth are integral to TEF, a Youth pre-meeting will be held on 27 November.

The geo-political context of the upcoming TEF is the simmering political and diplomatic tensions involving Taiwan, unresolved denuclearization issues on the Korean peninsula, and military

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brinkmanship and skirmishes in the South China Sea that has the potential to threaten regional security and pose grave challenges for world peace and people's security in the region.

TEF was established early this year as a response to a recommendation by an international consultation on "the mission of the Church in Taiwan today," held in this north Asian country in February 2017.

TEF serves as a cooperative endeavour of the ecumenical movement in accompanying the PCT mission priority for justice and peace in Taiwan and in East Asia. As the PCT seeks to be faithful to God's calling to identify with the suffering of its people and to give an account of its faith (1 Peter 3:15), it seeks the support of its partner churches, regional, global mission and ecumenical agencies. TEF represents an ecumenical quest and pilgrimage for peace and justice in Taiwan, East Asia and beyond due to the serious regional security challenges and their implications for world peace.

TEF is set up in the spirit of the ecumenical accompaniment programs, such as the Ecumenical Forum on Korea, Palestine-Israel Ecumenical Forum and the Colombian Peace Process.

Among the objectives of TEF are to strengthen and widen ecumenical participation in the pilgrimage for justice and peace in North East Asia with Taiwan as a case study in conflict management and resolution; to serve as a platform of common ecumenical action and advocacy in solidarity with the PCT, as it seeks national dignity, national sovereignty and a Taiwanese society built upon a solid foundation of love, justice and mercy; to mobilize and broaden ecumenical and Church support for the transitional justice process for the rights of indigenous peoples and victims in the context of the global ecumenical commitments; and to support PCT priorities for renewing relationships with the Chinese churches and the China Christian Council.

The tasks and functions of TEF include initiating dialogue and cooperation among participating churches, ecumenical bodies and Church agencies for common action for justice and peace in East Asia with specific emphasis on Taiwan; gathering and mobilizing financial resources for the TEF process; and developing and maintaining systematic communications among TEF members.

The co-conveners of TEF's steering group are Rev Dr Chris Ferguson, general secretary of the World Communion of Reformed Churches and Rev Dr Collin Cowan, general secretary of the Council for World Mission. Other steering group members represent PCT, Mission 21, World Student Christian Federation, Berliner Missionswerk, Presbyterian Church in Canada, United



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Reformed Church, United Church of Christ in Japan, and the partner churches in Korea, and the Philippines.

The upcoming TEF is an invitation to the national and international faith community to journey together with people of Taiwan and the PCT.



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Press Release 2

November 27, 2018

Ecumenical leaders urge churches to pursue agenda of Taiwan Ecumenical Forum

TAIPEI: The Taiwanese people within the international community and the rights of indigenous people, peaceful reunification of the Koreas and the human rights violations and traumatic experiences of Rohingya people in Myanmar and neighboring countries are among the concerns of the Taiwan Ecumenical Forum for Justice and Peace (TEF), said Reverend Collin Cowan, general secretary of the Council for World Mission (CWM)

The first meeting of TEF, organized and hosted by the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan, will begin tomorrow, 28 November at the Presbyterian Bible College in Hsinchu, Taiwan.

There will be some 150 participants from across Taiwan and other parts of the world.

Dr Collin Cowan will preach at the opening worship.

In an interview, Dr Cowan noted that hate crimes, border issues, the strategy to divide and conquer, disregard for the truth, disregard for human rights and dignity and climate change are issues that dislocate people and destroy the environment in the world.

He reminded that the “forces of empire” remain dominant representing itself in both blatant and subtle forms.

Dr Cowan, who is a co-convenor of TEF steering group wanted the meeting to have candid and open conversations around issues that are important to the PCT and the people of Taiwan as this process is meant to accompany them on the journey.

Dr Chris Ferguson, general secretary of the World Communion of Reformed Churches is the other convenor of TEF.



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Professor Victor Hsu, who is the PCT TEF Task Force coordinator, said that the PCT was eagerly anticipating the meeting which had been carefully prepared by the TEF Steering Group. “I am delighted with the enthusiastic response of the PCT partner churches. Moreover, the programme is carefully prepared in order to allow the participants to be updated about the latest developments in East Asia, including Taiwan and to discern together the signposts for the ecumenical journey for justice and peace in North East Asia,” he said.

The socio-cultural and geo-political issues have implications far beyond Taiwan, Rev. Cowan said and hoped that the meeting will have time and space to discuss the issues for “our mission as an ecumenical community.”

The general secretary of CWM also hoped that every ecumenical body and partner churches would take on the TEF agenda and seek ways to advance it within their constituency.

Among the objectives of TEF are to strengthen and widen ecumenical participation in the pilgrimage for justice and peace in North Asia with Taiwan as a case study in conflict management and resolution; to serve as a platform of common ecumenical action and advocacy in solidarity with the PCT, as it seeks national dignity, national sovereignty and a Taiwanese society built upon a solid foundation of love, justice and mercy; to mobilize and broaden ecumenical and Church support for the transitional justice process for the rights of indigenous peoples and victims in the context of the global ecumenical commitments; and to support PCT priorities for renewing relationships with the Chinese churches and the China Christian Council.

TEF is an invitation to the ecumenical community to journey together with people of Taiwan and the PCT.



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Press Release 3

29 November 2018

Taiwan Ecumenical Forum Gathering begins

Hsinchu, TAIWAN: A meeting of the Taiwan Ecumenical Forum (TEF) organized and hosted by the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan (PCT) began here today with a worship service attended by participants from different parts of the world.

In a sermon, Reverend Collin Cowan, general secretary of the Council for World Mission (CWM) told the participants that they are here because they have made a choice for justice and peace, a choice to be part of the journey with the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan (PCT) in its quest and commitment to be the church, walking with Jesus amid the suffering and brokenness.

Terming the journey as a “discipleship journey,” Reverend Cowan, who is an ordained minister of the United Church in Jamaica and Cayman Islands, noted that “the issues that define this journey are real and live; they spring from the bowels of discontent of real people who carry the scars of a hostile past and suffer pain and indignity of empires in all its forms.”

According to him, TEF is a statement of defiance and a statement of courage which asserts that “we will stand together for justice and peace, even if we are the minority.”

Mr. Chen Chien-Jen, vice-president of Taiwan who brought greetings from the government said that Taiwan is committed to working with like-minded countries to earn international recognition for it, and to promote democracy, peace and justice in the world.

Welcoming the participants, Reverend Lyim Hong-Tiong, general secretary of the PCT said that “the voice of Taiwanese people has yet to be heard and heeded by the international community.”

The PCT will identify with the suffering people of Taiwan and be a sign of hope for the Taiwanese society, the general secretary stated.



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Professor Victor Hsu, Coordinator of TEF-PCT Task Force welcomed the gathering and introduced the members of the TEF steering group and the members of the meeting's Listening and Discernment Group to the audience.

TEF participants heard presentations on "Contextual Bible study with indigenous people's testimonies" narrated by Reverends Omi Wiling, Pusan Tail and Liegeman Tudalimaw. The ecumenical responses were by Reverend Linda Patton-Cowie, Mr Maungarongo Tito, and Ms Maureen Laste. Evangelist Yohani Isqaqavut moderated the session.

Theological reflections and discernment came from a panel comprising Dr Huang Po-Ho, Reverend Patti Talbot and Dr Roderick Hewitt and from the participants.

Earlier, some 40 participants of the TEF Pre-Youth Meeting made presentations, including a Youth Declaration.

The first day's meeting concluded with a welcome dinner to the participants by the PCT and a Taiwan Culture Night.



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30 November 2018

Ecumenical leader calls for international support to gain sovereignty and dignity of Taiwan

Hsinchu, TAIWAN: For asserting that they are Taiwanese, two women waitresses lost their job in Sydney, Australia. When the owner of the Chinese restaurant asked them their nationality, they said they are Taiwanese. But, the Chinese boss wouldn't agree. He insisted that they are Chinese. The two women wouldn't budge. The furious employer fired them on the same day. This was one of the real stories Professor Victor Hsu, well known ecumenical leader shared in his presentation on "Taiwan's international status – An international orphan," on the second day of Taiwan Ecumenical Forum (TEF) meeting held here on 29 November.

TEF was established as a response to the recommendation of an international consultation on "the mission of the Church in Taiwan today," held in this north-east Asian country in February 2017.

Professor Hsu, coordinator of Presbyterian Church in Taiwan (PCT) TEF Task Force narrated another story that actually took place in 2015. A Taiwanese tourist visiting Geneva decided to go to the United Nations Office. She was denied entry by the security officers and rejected her Taiwanese passport and ID card. She was asked to come back with a valid Chinese passport.

The UN policy to reject entry to Taiwan passport holders is not something new. They have been denied entry to UN offices in New York as well simply because they were passport holders of the Republic of China (Taiwan) which is not a UN member.

Taiwan has no membership in the UN and in most of the UN related organizations, like the World Health Organization and International Civil Aviation Organization. Professor Hsu told the gathering.

Taiwan's application for a membership in Interpol was rejected recently, Professor Hsu said.



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Expressing concern of the people of Taiwan and the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan (PCT), the ecumenical leader with wide global ecumenical experience noted that Taiwan is being marginalized and is “almost like an international orphan.”

The country has been subjected to threats and bullying tactics of China, he said, adding that Taiwan’s sovereignty and dignity are “inviolable and should be safeguarded.”

According to Hsu, Taiwan’s sovereignty and dignity in the international community must be asserted with the strong support of friends in the international community.

Professor Hsu, a former associate general secretary of the PCT and currently an adviser to the PCT general secretary, urged TEF participants and churches across the world to share information about the aspirations and hope of the Taiwanese people to “participate and contribute their expertise and soft power in the community of nations.”

He also urged to share information with “your own government officials about the recent developments that impact negatively on the security, dignity and sovereignty of the people of Taiwan.”

Responding to the presentation, Reverend Levi Bautista of the United Methodist Church and currently the president of the Conference of Non-Governmental Organizations in Consultative Status with the UN said that “Victor’s high regard for his own people and his own church comes through clearly and passionately in his presentation.”

According to him, the presentation exudes an assertion about the dignity of the Taiwanese people. “This is an important assertion because dignity undergirds the assertion of security and sovereignty.”



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29 November 2018

Ecumenical youth calls on wider Church community to stand by Taiwan

Hsinchu, TAIWAN: Recognizing the socio-political and cultural realities facing Taiwan, including its international status, forty ecumenical youth from Asia, Pacific and Europe have called on the wider Church community to assert Taiwan's independence as an independence, and to express solidarity with the Taiwanese people and their suffering.

They also called on the churches and ecumenical organizations to increase the number of opportunities for exchange programs and missions to raise awareness about the issues and concerns in Taiwan.

The young people, who gathered here on 27 November to attend Taiwan Ecumenical Forum (TEF) pre-youth meeting challenged the churches, including the PCT, to listen to and act upon the prophetic voices of young people with regard to their radical solidarity with the people facing racial, religious, socio-economic, sexual, and gender-based discrimination.

The youth expressed sympathy and concern for the Taiwanese people's desire to be recognized as Taiwanese people with their own national identity.

"We encourage indigenous peoples of Taiwan to come together, to allow a stronger and more powerful impact in the transitional justice process," they said in an Ecumenical Youth Declaration.

The youth expressed their desire to promote education to change every nation's perspective towards indigenous peoples and their ways of life of.

They demanded for formations in various levels that are "pursuing and advocating our prophetic call for transitional justice."

The declaration advocated for safe spaces in churches, communities and societies for everyone to peacefully discuss issues concerning peace and justice.



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Press Release 6

1 December 2018

TEF meeting concludes after three days of intense reflections and deliberations

Hsinchu, TAIWAN: The three-day Taiwan Ecumenical Forum (TEF) meeting concluded here with a worship service on 30 November.

Mr Sandy Sneddon of the Church of Scotland delivered a sermon.

The morning worship service was led by Ms Necta Montes, executive secretary of the World Student Christian Federation,

Some 140 ecumenical and Church leaders, Church officials, activists and intellectuals from across the world attended TEF that was organized and hosted by the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan (PCT).

One of the highlights of the concluding day was presentations on “Broadening ecumenism as solidarity for justice and peace in Taiwan and beyond.”

Society of the Divine Word Father Jijimon Alakkalam Joseph who is a professor at the Fu Jen Catholic University in Taipei felt that despite the contributions of the ecumenical movement to promote justice and peace in the world, “at times we are overwhelmed by the fact that many people in the world today experience justice and peace only as a mirage...and a dream.”

Father Joseph asked whether it is worth investing time, energy and personnel by the ecumenical movement for building justice and peace.

“If churches want to be an instrument of justice and peace in the world, they must demonstrate their interdependence and solidarity...A fragmented church lacks peace within...and such a church can never be a channel and instrument of peace,” Divine Word Father told the gathering.

According to him if the churches want to be instruments of justice and peace in the world, they must demonstrate their interdependence and solidarity among themselves.



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During the discussions, Professor Victor Hsu stated that there had been a growing positive relationship between the PCT and the Catholic Church in Taiwan since 1991.

Reverend Sudu Tada, an indigenous person and an ordained minister of the PCT, in his presentation said that learning the worldview of indigenous people, like “treating land as our mother,” can help us promote and justice and peace in the world.

The participants heard bible studies on “Deepening analysis of empire,” by Dr Dario Barolin, Dr Lo Kong-Hi, Dr Yuki Takai-Heller and Bishop Reuel Marigza.

A reflective report, drafted by the Listening and Discernment Group (LDG) was presented for consideration. The moderator of the group, Rev. John Proctor, of the United Reformed Church, UK, said that the report mainly addresses the Steering Group of TEF to offer sign posts, directions and questions to assist its task to plan the future work of TEF, and to “help the Steering Group to steer.” The report commended the PCT for its commitment to justice, partnership, friendship, unity, resilience, candour and for taking the voices of youth seriously.

“The Youth Forum that preceded the meeting produced some excellent materials,” the report said adding that “we commend this work warmly to member churches.”

Gender justice, climate justice and economic justice must be a constant challenge in shaping the Church’ wholistic witness, is one of the 13 suggestions and recommendations to the Steering Group.

Contact:

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