

A Joint Vision from “Peace Building in a Multi-Religious World”

We, as International representatives from our respective churches and institutions from Australia, Fiji, Papua New Guinea, China, Malaysia, Singapore, Philippines, Hong Kong China, Liberia, Ghana, Tanzania, Kenya, Mozambique, DR Congo, Cameroon, Nicaragua, Honduras, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Brazil, and Germany reflect on our time together at the Summer School program of 2019:

We thank God that we can enjoy ...

- The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the common faith we have in our Triune God as we experienced deep Christian fellowship in an atmosphere of love and peace, even though we acknowledge we have much diversity in language, culture, and backgrounds;
- The generosity and hospitality of our hosts who welcomed us into their towns, into their history (including the stories and places of the Reformation, WWII and the Cold War), into their homes, and into their hearts as we learnt of many religious struggles and opportunities in Germany and across the world;
- The goodness and wonder of God’s creation and his power to recreate and renew hearts and lives and relationships in the face of evil;
- The variety of presentations and tours which deepened our understanding of theology, pastoral care, church history, major conflicts, trauma therapy, cultural contexts, and religious diversity;
- The various worship experiences, devotions, and opportunities to sing God’s praise in other tongues which will echo in our hearts and minds as we return to our homes;
- The fellowship we have enjoyed with each other as we learnt together, travelled together, laughed together, sang together, dreamed together, and were challenged together; all of which has deepened our love and care for each other across the world;
- The opportunities God places before us to witness his love and peace in the public sphere.

We are concerned because ...

- Many historical and current issues confront our churches across the world which threaten or destroy God’s creation and peaceful relationships between human beings;
- Human beings can be incredibly evil (such as during the Nazi regime, religious extremism, and abuses of human rights and freedoms), which in turn lead us to reflect on our own contexts where human rights are being abused or threatened;
- There are many people who are not being treated with dignity and respect, and some extremists will resort to terror and violence to further their causes;
- There are many opportunities for good and truthful communication through mainstream and social media, but these are easily abused which may lead many to despair, hatred, confusion, indifference, and false hope;

- There is much to rejoice and marvel in regards to the diversity among human beings, but sometimes our diversity (such as diversity of wealth, status, gender, social standing, power, property, and religion) may lead to conflict, division, injustice and inequity;
- We wonder if the important lessons of the Reformation aren't continually being re-learned and cherished.

We are encouraged by ...

- The grace of God who loves all of us so much – including our enemies, that God the Father sent his only dearly loved Son to die for us so that we may be forgiven, cleansed, and reconciled to him and to each other;
- The way we can come together in peace with diverse backgrounds, cultures, languages, confessions and experiences;
- The way our views of the world and God's work in his church have been challenged and expanded;
- Those who listen to the cries of the poor, marginalized, victimized, terrorized and abused, and respond with care, compassion, and appropriate action;
- The processes of, and efforts toward, peace and reconciliation between peoples, even after devastating conflicts, such as the Cold War, divisions in Europe, WWII, etc;
- The way God brings beacons of light, love, hope, forgiveness and peace during times of despair, terror, conflict, and war;
- The openness of each participant to experience and enjoy the opportunities of our time together, even when some may hold contrary views;
- The insights we have gained so we may be better equipped to listen to and engage positively and productively with other religions and ethnic communities in our own contexts;
- The fact God's not finished with us yet!

We have learned ...

- Human beings have the capacity for incredible horror, terror, abuse and violence, yet through the power of God's Holy Spirit, they also have the capacity to respond by giving hope, mercy, forgiveness, service and grace;
- To seek mutual respect and understanding by using inclusive language and standing together in solidarity;
- All human beings are created in God's image, and so they all have worth, value and dignity;
- In our dialogue with others, we are allowed to disagree with them, yet still respect them and their views without compromising our confession of faith;
- We as Christians are the salt of the earth who are called to be God's voice to the world;

- From the horrors of violence and conflict in history that we should always remember to build mutually beneficial relationships through reconciliation, co-existence and peace;
- To patiently listen to each other so that we may understand and respect each other more deeply;
- Through our fellowship by sharing our experiences and stories to recognize one another's strengths and areas of growth;
- To look for new ways to foster and nurture peace in our various contexts;
- The church is called to be the messenger of Christ's gospel of forgiveness, reconciliation and peace and she may need to encourage the use of new spaces where interfaith dialogue and the building of intercultural, interreligious and intrareligious relationships can advance through better understanding and peaceful co-existence.

We have hope ...

- Because God is faithful, loving, gracious, merciful and forgiving and he will not abandon his creation or his people;
- Because God does not turn a blind eye to the pain and conflicts of human beings and will use Christians and non-Christians for his work of forgiveness, peace and reconciliation in the world;
- Because there are people who continue to listen, who consider all humans to be worthy of dignity and respect, who serve to restore hope and peace to those who are traumatized by evil, and who are inspired by Holy Scripture to proclaim God's forgiveness and love to all people;
- Because there are people who have courage to open their hearts to people of different backgrounds, faith, cultures, languages, abilities, and experiences;
- We too can do great things through Jesus Christ when we work together in unity and respect;
- God has given us the words and means to bring real and meaningful hope to all nations;
- God will use us to restore peace and hope to those around us.

We commit to ...

- Remember these important lessons and be peacemakers in our contexts.