

Asian Phase Communiqué 2001

Following a European phase of international conversations between representatives from the Anglican Communion and the Baptist World Alliance at Norwich Cathedral, England in September 2000, the Asian phase was held from January 18-21, 2001 in Yangon, Myanmar.

These meetings are part of a five year commitment by the two bodies. The next set of meetings will be held as follows: January 2002, Nairobi, Kenya; January 2003, the Caribbean and the USA. The Continuing Committee consisting of four Anglicans and four Baptists will draft a report to be submitted to the ACC and the BWA in 2005. Meetings of the Continuing Committee will take place in Australia, England and the USA.

The objectives for the International Conversations are:

1. To enable Anglican/Baptists to learn from each other and to deepen understanding of relationships between our two communions in the light of their histories.
2. To share with each other how we understand the Christian faith and to work toward a common confession of the Apostolic Faith.
3. To identify issues of doctrine and the nature of the church to be explored further in possible future conversations.
4. To look for ways to cooperate in mission and community activities and increase our fellowship and common witness to the Gospel.

The Asian phase was held in the headquarters building of the Myanmar Baptist Convention to which came representatives of the two bodies plus an observer from the Myanmar Council of Churches. The gracious hospitality of the Myanmar Baptist Convention was outstanding and the opening dinner hosted to which came 100 church leaders from Myanmar was a memorable commencement to what were historic meetings in Asia.

Anglican and Baptist representatives gave an overview of the life of their respective communions in Asia revealing their missionary nature. Both have extensive involvement right throughout the region and their people interact in many countries.

Presentations were given on Baptist identity and issues that define Asian Baptist life, and a reflection on an Anglican paper submitted to the Lambeth Conference The Virginia Report. Papers on episkopé (oversight) and Christian initiation from representatives of the Church of North India brought a valuable dimension to the conversations.

There was a strong contribution from the Asian representatives to the conversations which revealed the importance of "contextualizing" the meetings by ensuring that at each series of meetings a majority of the participants will be regional representatives.

The meeting not only dealt with issues of great importance to a mutual understanding of each communion's practices and beliefs, but particular dynamics of church life in Asia that both must confront were highlighted.

It seemed appropriate that the delegates to the conversations could share with Christians in Myanmar in a service in the Anglican Cathedral in Yangon to celebrate the Week of Christian Unity. A combined closing service was held at the auditorium of the Myanmar Baptist Seminary in Insein on Sunday afternoon, January 21.

The following persons participated in the meetings:

Anglicans:

Bruce Matthews (Canada, co-chair, continuing committee)
Samuel San Si Htay (Myanmar, continuing committee)
Guen Seok Yang (Korea)
Andrew Chan (Hong Kong)
Samuel R. Cutting (India)
Dhirendra Sahu (India)
Mark Saw Maung Doe (Myanmar)
David Powys (Australia)
Simon Bi Ben Htoo (Myanmar)
Andrew Zaw Lwin (Myanmar)
David Hamid (Anglican Communion Office - co-secretary, continuing committee)

Baptists:

Paul Fiddes (England, co-chair, continuing committee)
Ken Manley (Australia, continuing committee)
Chang Young Shim (Korea)
Simon Pau Khan En (Myanmar)
Jill Manton (Australia)
Arthur Ko Lay (Myanmar)
Anna May Say Pa (Myanmar)
Bonny Resu (India)
John Maung Latt (Myanmar)
Tony Cupit (BWA Office, co-secretary, continuing committee)

Administrative support was provided by Ms Rosemary Palmer from the Anglican Communion Office.