



HEADLINES

Newsletter of the Asia and Pacific Alliance of YMCAs No. 47 / November 2005

YMCA/YWCA Week of Prayer / YMCA Peace Day

“Who Counts in the Eyes of God?”

“Who Counts in the Eyes of God”, based on Matthew 20: 1-16, is the theme of the World YMCA-YWCA Week of Prayer to be celebrated on 13-19 November 2005. The YMCA Peace Day is Saturday, 19 November.

This year’s theme highlights the plight of the marginalised. It encourages members to work towards being truly inclusive communities. It calls for reflection on what the Bible says about our attitudes and responses to the marginalised. YMCAs and YWCAs are asked how they can provide leadership on issues related to poverty, justice and discrimination. The YMCA Peace Day culminates the celebration. It affirms that war is not, and never can be the means to peace. It reminds us that, “No war is ever holy. Humanity is not improved by violence or terror. Peace is the name of God. God never wants elimination of the other”.

1. Executive Committee and Related Meetings 2006

Please note the dates for our Executive Committee and Related Meetings, 2006 to be held at the International House, Chinese YMCA of Hong Kong:

15 March	Special Session on Tsunami Response	16:00 – 18:00
16 – 18 March	Executive Committee Meeting Standing Committees Meetings	09:00 – 18:00
19 March	National General Secretaries’ Meeting	09:00 – 17:00

A Session on Leadership Development and a time for movements to meet in sub-regional groups to review implementation of the Quadrennial Programme Plan will form part of the process of the Executive Committee and Related Meetings. Further details and registration Forms will be available by December 2005.

2. South Asia Quake ~ Response

On the morning of 8 October 2005, at 8.32 am, an earthquake measuring 7.6 on the Richter Scale hit the border areas of Pakistan, India and Afghanistan. The devastation has been described as the worst in the history of Pakistan, the worst hit area as the epicentre was near Muzaffarabad, the main town in Pakistan-controlled Kashmir.

The Lahore YMCA has undertaken local collection of relief supplies and donations to aid the victims of the earthquake. The Lahore YMCA General Secretary, John Shaffaq has reported that volunteers led by the president, Andrew McMillan, had returned on 26 October 2005 from their second visit to the quake-affected areas. Coordinated by Samuel Pervez Bobby, they had reached Balakot passing many villages on the way that had been totally destroyed. The survivors were without shelter, warm clothes and food. Many had been injured. The YMCA team transported relief items in smaller vehicles. Trucks could not be used because of the difficult terrain and bad road conditions. The polluted air and the smell of dead bodies under the debris of the houses and buildings added to the miseries of the survivors and the relief personnel.

The YMCA with the City Administrator (who had lost his own son in the quake) had distributed drinking water, blankets, warm clothes, sweaters, shoes, food items, some medicines and tents. The people were happy to receive the much needed relief items. Many of them were almost in tears when they received the relief goods. Some had come from the mountainous areas 6 hours away as their villages could not be reached by relief teams. Another truckload of collected and purchased relief items will be transported to the earthquake-affected areas after the *Eid* (Muslim festival) holidays.

The Asia and Pacific Alliance has sent an advance of US\$3,000 to the Lahore YMCA to meet some of the relief expenses so far. We are coordinating contributions at the APAY Secretariat towards a fund for the mid-term response programmes that we are looking forward to receiving from the Lahore YMCA soon.

3. Youth Development in Action: Hong Kong, India, Korea

3.1 Bangladesh YMCA Organises Youth Bible Seminar: The National Council of YMCAs of Bangladesh organised a Bible Seminar and Cultural Exchange on 6-8 October 2005 on the theme of the YMCA/YWCA World Week of Prayer: *"Who Counts in the Eyes of God?"* The 24 local YMCA youth participants and 3 Norwegian Youth selected on the theme with Duncan Chowdhury the National General Secretary making a presentation on the theme. The youth expressed their commitment to expressing Christ's teachings in their everyday action and thought. The seminar ended with some strong commitment by the youths to act for the poor.

3.2 YMCA of Hong Kong Launches Young Leaders' Roundtable: The YMCA of Hong Kong launched its Young Leaders' Roundtable (YLR) with a Commissioning Service on 24 October 2005 during their Annual General Meeting. The YLR aims to provide a space for young leaders in the YMCA to participate actively in the decision-making processes of the YMCA.

Rev. Samuel Stephens, APAY President officiated the Commissioning Service. Jack Young, President of the YMCA of Hong Kong, together with the YMCA Board Members, commissioned the youth leaders. The YLR members drawn from various YMCA service programmes and led by Ms. Sharon Ko, were “charged” to carry out the YMCA mission in the community. The YLR meets regularly to plan, implement programmes and deliberate on how to participate and contribute in the affairs of the YMCA. Ms. Alice Yuk, General Manager of membership and Community Services, provides guidance to the group.

3.3 Indian YMCA Holds Regional Youth Assembly: The YMCA of India held a well-attended Northern Region Youth Assembly at the YMCA Youth Centre, Bhimtal, Uttranchal State on 28-30 October 2005. The Youth Assembly observed the Asia and Pacific Students and Youth Week with the theme “Knowledge and Discretion to the Youth” on Sunday of 30 October.

3.4 Korea YMCA Study Tour: An Asia Youth Movement Study Tour to Hong Kong was organised by the National Council of YMCAs of Korea on 5-8 October 2005. The tour was part of the Millennium Youth Mentor School programme. The programme is aimed at enriching the experiences of Korean youth leaders. It is also to network with Asian youth leaders and to share a common vision for participation in community. The 21 participants from different parts of Korea are involved in youth work in their respective YMCAs.

They visited some youth programmes of the Chinese YMCA of Hong Kong, and the work of the Society for Community Organization (SOCO) among the urban poor. A discussion on Asian youth movement was held with the APAY and the World Student Christian Federation Asia Pacific. Dr. David Kwang Sun-Suh, former President of the World Alliance also addressed the participants.

4. Leadership Review for Mission and Movement Strengthening

The Leadership Development Review will take place on **10-14 November** at the YMCA Wu Kwai Sha Youth Village, Hong Kong. The work will focus on how to strengthen the leadership capacity (both volunteer and professional) in the region through established and new initiatives. Three volunteer leaders (facilitators of the Advanced Studies Programme), two national general secretaries, three senior executive secretaries, the fourteen participants of the current Advanced Studies Programme and the APAY Executive Staff will be involved in the process.

5. Tsunami Response ~ Selected Updates

In **Sri Lanka**, progress is being made in response to programmes in different components, especially in housing, community centres, livelihood recovery and developing the capacity to handle the increased workload of the YMCAs. An interim six-month review was carried out with the Tsunami Task Group by Chris Roles (Y CARE), PCG Chairperson and Yip Kok Choong (APAY) in early October.

In **India**, as previously reported, the work on housing is advanced. Livelihood recovery programmes are being initiated.

In **Indonesia** the response programme officially began in October, given the difficult conditions in the tsunami-affected areas and the need to secure financial support for the plan. The social service and community building components are the first to be initiated.

6. Ubuntu - Striving Together for Life and Peace

The 16th World Council of the World Alliance of YMCAs will take place in Durban, South Africa on 10-15 July 2006. It is expected to bring together more than 800 representatives from more than 120 YMCAs worldwide. The World Council theme is “Ubuntu: Striving together for life and peace”. “Ubuntu” is an African concept translated as “ A person is a person through (other) persons” or through the expression “ I am because you are, you are because I am”. An individual’s identity is seen through his/her relationship with others. The participants are invited to experience this collective spirit through various programme elements of the World Council. They include: Movement Strengthening, Building Community in Multi-religious and Multi-Ethnic Contexts, and Gender Justice - YMCA committed to social change?

We encourage your movement to register for the World Youth Council and the 16th World Council, to be renewed and motivated for engagement in the Mission of the YMCA. The deadline for registrations is **30th November**.

The preceding World Youth Council on 7- 9 July 2006 will focus on developing the leadership capacity of younger YMCA leaders. It will seek to respond to younger leaders' aspirations to be more effective in YMCA leadership and in working for justice.

7. Anniversaries.....

October and November were months of thanksgiving and recommitment to the YMCA Mission by the following YMCAs that celebrated significant anniversaries:

October 12 – Dhaka YMCA, Bangladesh, 40th Anniversary

October 22 – Mytkyina YMCA, Myanmar, 50th Anniversary

October 26 – Manila Downtown YMCA, Philippines, 85th Anniversary

October 29 – Kuala Lumpur YMCA, Malaysia, 100th Anniversary

November 5 – Taipei YMCA, Taiwan, 60th Anniversary

The **Kuala Lumpur YMCA celebrated its Centenary** with an Ecumenial Forum (The YMCA and the Church) at which Rev. Caesar Molebatsi, President of the World Alliance, Rev. Dr. Herman Shastri, General Secretary of the Council of Churches of Malaysia, and Yip Kok Choong, General Secretary of the Asia and Pacific Alliance (in place of the President who was indisposed) spoke at the Forum. Rev. Samuel D. Stephens, President of the Asia and Pacific Alliance was the guest preacher at the Thanksgiving Worship. A Charity Golf Tournament was also held in support of the YMCA’s Deaf Work.

8. Reminders

8.1 Asia Pacific Students and Youth Week (APSYW): The EASY Net’s Celebration of Asia Pacific Students and Youth Week (APSYW) ~ October/November under the theme “*Knowledge and Discretion to the Youth*”: YMCAs are invited to organise programmes related to Youth Education in the Context of Globalisation and/or join other ecumenical partners in carrying out the APSYW.

8.2 Interfaith Co-operation Forum (ICF) School of Peace (ISP): The Interfaith Co-operation Forum (ICF) School of Peace (ISP) will run from February to May in Bangalore, India. It is designed to strengthen young people from around Asia as “agents of transformation in the task of building cultures and commitment of justpeace.” Twenty participants between 20 to 30 years of age from areas of violence or potential violence within Asia will be selected for the ISP. They should be active in peace and justice issues at the local level.

National movements from areas of violence or potential violence interested in nominating a person(s) **for selection** to participate in the ISP are requested to discuss the matter with the APAY General Secretary **before the end of November 2005**.

8. Concluding Thoughts

I ended the last Headlines with this line: *The great thing in life is not where we stand, but what direction we are heading*. Reflecting on some of the messages at the Kuala Lumpur and Taipei YMCAs’ recent anniversaries, I felt this was a good line to begin these Concluding Thoughts with.

At the Kuala Lumpur YMCA’s Ecumenial Forum on “the YMCA and the Church”, Rev. Dr. Herman Shastri began his presentation with one of my own favourite texts from the Old Testament. He quoted Isaiah 54:2, “*Enlarge the site of your tent, and let the curtains of your habitation be stretched out,lengthen your cords and strengthen your stakes.*” (NRSV). Then, at the 60th Anniversary Thanksgiving Worship of the Taipei YMCA, Rev. Hsiu-Kung Weng, its President, read from Deuteronomy 1:5-8 where Moses told the Israelis, “*you have stayed long enough at this mountain. Resume your journey and go*” (v. 6,7). He had titled his message “*Break Camp and Move On*”.

In the Isaiah 54 text, we are called to extend the realms of our reach and mission, and to be strengthened for the purpose. We are called to inclusiveness. We are called to reach out and be with the community. We are also reminded to strengthen ourselves for the tasks ahead as we engage with the community. I especially appreciated Rev. Weng’s message “*Break Camp and Move On*” based on the Deuteronomy 1 text. Rev. Weng had called on the gathered “not to lose our first love” of being and doing the YMCA, of being a movement. In Chinese culture, to reach 60 is to have gone a full cycle. We begin another cycle. He reckoned that it was time to “move on”, to change, before we stagnate the YMCA and become irrelevant to the community, or get ourselves into trouble. Not that we only need to change at 60 or 100 for others. For him, the YMCA needs “to move on”, to “change” continuously.

With the changing context, we need to know how to change, how to discern the goals for the future, whilst remaining steadfast in our God-given Mission. We cannot stand still. We need to know the direction we are heading and be renewed to continue to be servants of God in the community. Otherwise, we stagnate – our passion for the YMCA Mission diminishes. Our movement stagnates. It loses its social relevance.

Let us learn to “*enlarge the site of our tent*”, and when the time comes, break camp and move on in our Mission journey. “*Resume your journey and go....*” do God’s bidding.

May God bless and keep all of us as we move on in our Mission Journey.....

Yip Kok Choong
General Secretary

With Executive Secretaries Shella Quezada-Zagada and Lakshan Dias

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