

2015 JEJU FORUM
A Gathering of Global Christian Leaders
“Christian Witness in Changing Global Landscapes”
You are the Light of the World (Mathew 5:14)
COMMUNIQUE

The 2015 Jeju Forum met from 5 to 8 May at the Rothem House in Jeju, Korea. The Forum gathered more than 120 participants from a wide range of Christian churches, i.e. evangelicals, Pentecostals, Orthodox and various Protestant churches. We were invited by three churches: the Myungsung Presbyterian Church, the Yoido Full Gospel Church and the Gwanglim Methodist Church on behalf of the Global Forum for the Future of World Christianity, an initiative of Korean churches. The Forum sought to be an open space where voices of those not commonly together can share, and hopefully discover fresh forms of Christian witness within the changing global landscape. Therefore, it did not begin with any pre-determined agenda or outcome.

The Forum was enriched through the sharing of God’s word in worship and prayer each day. The various presentations during the Forum dwelt on such topics as peace building, economic and ecological justice, Christian unity, *diakonia* and the experience of the Korean churches. They were testimonies of how the Christian churches have and continue to work for the timeless values of justice, peace and fullness of life for all God’s creation. Our time together highlighted the shift in the centre of gravity of world Christianity from the global north to the global south as being one of the most significantly important features of our changing landscape. This demographic transition has led to more Christians being present in the global south for the first time in a thousand years. This has been accompanied by the accelerating growth of Pentecostal and evangelical communities, also decisively changing the global landscape. These realities are creating a set of new challenges and possibilities in the search for Christian unity. The shift, however, has not been matched by a corresponding shift in theological and financial resources, and institutional structures, which presents a serious on-going dilemma to any efforts toward Christian unity.

The presentations by participants pointed to the stark and seemingly hopeless realities of our world. We noted the urgent need to stand in solidarity with our Christian sisters and brothers who are being persecuted in the Middle East, Africa and Asia. The abuse and misuse of religion which results in violence in these regions presents a serious challenge where Christian witness and presence is threatened. In addition, the growing gap between the rich and the poor is becoming more severe and presents a critical challenge to social cohesion and stability. The continuing economic inequalities which have become prevalent in our societies are causing the younger generation to lose hope in their future. Such economic inequality and injustice are not by accident. They are the results of decisions and choices that have been taken by individuals, and by the policies of institutions and governments. The devastating impact of climate change, particularly on the smaller island communities of the Pacific raised, once again, the important question of how the Christian churches engage their responsibility as stewards of God’s creation. The fact that these small island communities suffer the consequences of over consumption in other parts of the world, notably the industrially and economically developed countries, highlighted the structural injustice of climate change. This requires a courageous commitment of the churches in lifting up a united voice for decisive



action by governments and communities. Our presentations also drew out multiple ways in which the churches engage the ministry of *diakonia*, relate with one another as partners and contribute to transforming the world in love and service.

The participants were also given the opportunity to learn more about the witness of the Korean churches. Recognising that the Korean peninsula remains a divided land we learned about the fruits and challenges that the Korean churches face in their work for peace building and reconciliation. It was noted that the Korean churches struggle with meaningfully engaging civil society as it wrestles with how Christian faith meets public discourse. It was interesting to hear their self-critical reflection in recognising the need for renewal of the structures, re-visioning of the faith that transcends personal piety and leads to public witness, and faithful presence in the world.

Throughout our time together we asked each other how we should respond to these critical challenges. In our discussions we identified several spiritual gifts that the Christian churches possess. In the midst of a rapidly changing world where the pressure to adapt is great we recognised the importance of cherishing the traditions of our faith. We also affirmed that in faith we are called to listen and to discern the will of God and how God is at work in our midst. We affirmed that faith required us to go beyond human rational thinking with its emphasis on factual data. We confess that faith requires prophetic action, even when circumstances, conditions and human capacities indicate that such action is unrealistic. We acknowledge that as leaders in our communities we often have access to persons and institutions of power but have not adequately addressed them with the prophetic message of transformation. We admit that at times even we have become corrupted by the tide of materialism and power. We believe that the Christian vocation of worship, which nurtures and nourishes our relationship with Jesus Christ as well as with our neighbour is foundational for empowering our engagement with the world. However, the Christian churches must also constantly remind ourselves that we are called to deepen the quality of discipleship and obedience to the Christ in the public sphere. We are drawn into the relationship with God for the sake of transforming the world. In this sense, faith in God is personal but not private. Christian witness must be marked by courage and grounded in faith. It should serve to present “unexpected hope” in our present time.

The 2015 Jeju Forum opened a space for creative dialogue and fresh possibilities in identifying new, creative and dynamic alternatives for promoting common witness in the areas of unity and mission; *diakonia* and education; and promoting justice and peace. The participants affirmed the unique mediating role of the Korean churches and the Jeju Forum as a “divine space” which provides freedom to share stories and experience renewal. In addition, participants made comments for improving the quality of our engagement, such as strengthening the participation and contribution of women and young persons, as well as representatives from the Roman Catholic Church and other regions of the world. We also raised probing questions which require sustained attention as we look to the future. Among them were the following:

- What external factors are dividing Christians in addition to internal ones?
- What is God saying to us through the shift in the centre of gravity of world Christianity?
- Is the shift in world Christianity’s centre of gravity only about demography?



- Are there Pentecostal witnesses and actions addressing issues of peace?
- What is the real urgency for unity? Does it serve the church or the world? Unity flows from the Gospel and the real purpose of unity is transformation of the world.
- What is the minimum that we need to do to be faithful to the prayer of Jesus that we may all be one so that the world will believe?
- How can we maintain distinctiveness without being stuck and divided by labels?
- Can we distinguish between the “prosperity gospel” and the church of the poor?
- How can our solidarity with Christians who are persecuted be free from narrow political agendas?

We are deeply grateful for this fresh and creative space of ecumenical dialogue that has been created under the auspices of the Global Forum for the Future of World Christianity. We recognise the crucial need for deeper avenues of dialogue between the churches of the global north and the global south. Through the 2015 Jeju Forum the Korean churches have opened this opportunity in a fresh way and with new partners. We pray that such efforts can be continued for the sake of Christian unity leading to the transformation of the world and for the glory of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

