



Christian Conference of Asia

ASIA SUNDAY

13 MAY 2018



**Embracing the Differently Abled;
Upholding Their Dignity**

ASIA SUNDAY -2018

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Embracing the Differently Abled, and Upholding Their Dignity

“His disciples asked him, “Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?” “Neither this man nor his parents sinned,” said Jesus, “but this happened so that the work of God might be displayed in his life.” (John 9:2-3)

“Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me. But he said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” (2 Corinthians 12: 8-9)

Asia Sunday is observed every year on the Sunday before Pentecost, and it coincides with the founding of the Christian Conference of Asia. Asia Sunday celebrations focus on particular themes every year. This special occasion reminds member churches and councils as well as churches and ecumenical partners around the world to offer special prayers and organise worship services as part of the observance of Asia Sunday. In 2018, it falls on 13th May, but as usual, churches and councils are free to choose a date, as per their convenience, to observe Asia Sunday in respective of local or national contexts.

INTRODUCTION

One in every six persons in Asia has some form of disability, and they number about 650 million. This number is expected to rise over the coming decades due to ageing populations, natural disasters, conflicts and war, chronic health conditions, road accidents and related injuries, poor working conditions, and other factors. The number of persons who live with different forms of disabilities are increasing in the world. They are unseen, unheard and often excluded from access to education, employment, social protection services as well as legal support systems. They continue to face barriers, and their participation as equal members of society is limited.

Disability affects hundreds of thousands of families in Asia. The two-way link between poverty and disability creates a vicious circle. Poor people are more at risk of disability because of lack of access to nutrition, health care, sanitation as well as safe living and working conditions. In most contexts, churches in Asia also have not properly recognized people with disabilities in their congregations or communities. Disabled people are alienated from the mainstream of society as they face isolation from friends, family members, and members in their own communities. Such exclusion even isolates them from active involvement or participation in the spiritual life of the Church which is supposed to be a “caring and inclusive” community.

Jesus loved, cared, and protected people who lived with disabilities in his society. He strongly disputed the connection between sin and blindness, saying, “It was not that this man sinned, or his parents, but that the works of God might be made manifest in him” (John 9:3). Jesus healed the blind man, but first Jesus gave him dignity and self-respect. All people with or without disabilities are created in the image of God and are called to be in an inclusive community, in which they are empowered to use their various God-given gifts. Persons with disabilities have great capacities and gifts that can be shared in the household of God, which should be a “caring and inclusive” community. The Church as a community is called

by God to embrace everyone, including those who live with disabilities; and understand the nature of diversity in humans, who are created in the image of God. “Yahweh does not see as mortals see; they look on the outward appearance, but Yahweh looks on the heart” (1 Samuel 16.7). It is the responsibility of the Church to recognize that people with disabilities have gifts of their own to bring to the body of Christ. This also reminds the Church to speak of ministry with, and not ministry to, people with disabilities.

The issue of disability has not been addressed by CCA with as much importance as it should have been in the past years. However, the new strategic programme direction of CCA has identified the advocacy on the disabled as a priority. CCA organised an Asia Regional Consultation on the theme, ‘Disabled People: Strength in Weakness and Quest for Dignity’ and held it in conjunction with the Asia Mission Conference in Yangon, Myanmar in October 2017. The Yangon consultation launched an Asian Ecumenical Disability Advocacy Network (AEDAN).

The observance of Asia Sunday-2018 on the theme ‘**Embracing the Differently Abled, and Upholding Their Dignity**’ is yet another initiative of CCA to prepare the churches and various actors in the Asian ecumenical movement to renew their commitment to ecumenical advocacy on the differently abled people in Asia. CCA urges its member churches and councils, as well as ecumenical partners to observe Asia Sunday-2018 on the theme, ‘Embracing the Differently Abled, and Upholding Their Dignity’.

Mathews George Chunakara
General Secretary, CCA

ASIA SUNDAY-2018

Order of Worship

Processional Hymn/Lyric & Procession specially persons with disabilities

(If possible, a procession of people with different disabilities is encouraged. They shall have visibility in the front row of the worship place.)

Call to Worship

Leader (L): We come together today as people with different skills, different abilities, different disabilities.

Congregation (C): We come, however, as one body in Christ.

L: We ask God to help us to be compassionate to all, even as God has been compassionate to us.

C: Lord, help us to gather together, in faith and in compassion. Help us to welcome and honour everyone in this community.

L: Regardless of physical strength and ability,

C: Regardless of difference in mind or spirit,

L: Open us, O God. Make us accessible to your Spirit, and accessible to all your people.

All: Amen.

Traditional

Syria

$\text{♩} = 108$

Hal-le, hal-le-lu - jah. Hal-le, hal-le-lu - jah. Hal-le-lu-jah, hal-le-lu-jah,
hal - le-lu-jah. Hal - le-lu-jah, hal - le-lu-jah, hal - le-lu-jah.

As taught by Metropolitan Mar Gregorios Yohanna Ibrahim
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Lighting of the traditional oil lamp/ Lighting a candle

Opening Prayer

God, we believe that all people are your beloved creations. The people in your house today are of different ages, shapes, sizes, and abilities; but we are all your children and together we make up one family. We are tempted to understand our neighbour as separate and different from ourselves, but your call today reminds us of our interconnectedness.

God, our reformer! As we worship you, help us feel your shared presence, knit us together more tightly and motivate us to practise inclusivity and accessibility in our journey. We pray, in the name of the triune God, who inspires and reforms the whole creation. Amen.

Hymn ... Journey Together with Jesus Christ

J = c.86
3 = A

1. Journ - ey to - geth - er with Je - sus Christ. Pro - claim God's fav - or
 2. Journ - ey to - geth - er with Je - sus Christ. Learn his ex - am - ple.
 3. Journ - ey to - geth - er with Je - sus Christ. For - giv - ing sin and
 4. Journ - ey to - geth - er with Je - sus Christ. De - ny your - selves and

to brok - en lives. Bring Chris - tian com - fort to the op - pressed.
 Give up your lives, To serve the peo - ple of A - sian lands,
 re - stor - ing lives, Be - ing trans - formed while dis - cern - ing good,
 take up the cross. Ex - pect - ing no - thing, do good and lend

Tell of God's ven - geance to all the rest.
 Will - ing to die with the Son of Man.
 Clothed in the like - ness of one true God.
 For God is kind to both foe and friend.

Words: David Alexander, Taiwan/USA, 2017
 Music: Mutya Lopez-Solis, Philippines, 1970s

MALATI:
 9999

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Confession

L: Merciful and Life-giving God, we confess that we have been disobedient. You taught us to love our neighbour as ourselves, but we chose to be selfish with our love.

You taught us to feed the hungry and poor at whatever cost, but we chose to be greedy and limit our willingness to serve.

We have disregarded your example and dishonoured your name when we chose not to celebrate the holiness of your created world or proclaim the sacred worth of our brothers and sisters who are differently abled.

C: Forgive us, God of compassion.

L: God of the Disabled, we bow down in humility in your presence. We have sinned against you by demeaning the life status of people with disabilities in society. We have often been silent and ignored them when they were longing to get accessibilities.

C: Forgive us, God of compassion.

L: God, Creator of the disabled, forgive us for making remarks and comments against disability as a curse, wage of sin and wrath of God without realizing that the disabled persons were 'also' created by you in your own image.

C: Forgive us, God of compassion.

L: God of life, we are sorry for looking down and treating the people with disabilities as objects for 'charity' instead of considering them as fuller humans who do not need our sympathy but empathy.

C: Forgive us and create in us the vision of opening our hearts, minds, and doors as wide as the love of God, so that no one is left outside.

All: God of compassion, give us the vision to see that all people have

gifts and abilities to share as part of our community of faith. We pray in the name of the one who always saw the best in people, Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

Assurance of Pardon

L: O God of the visually, physically, intellectually challenged, O creator of the deaf, dumb, blind, limping and paralytic, you have heard our heartfelt confessions: forgive us.

God is merciful and just to forgive our sins when we confess. Be assured that the God of the disabled will pardon us and all sins that we have committed in being inaccessible and exclusive. God of love, help us to be transformed and to build friendly, inclusive and accessible communities of God's people.

All: Amen.

Bible Reading

- a. 1 Samuel 16:7
- b. John 9:1-12
- c. 2 Cor. 12: 2-10

Biblical Reflection

Prayer

L: God, let our churches become places where all God's people are welcomed. Let us realise and recognise, through our faith in Christ, the dignity and rights of our sisters and brothers with challenging conditions as they are also daughters and sons of God.

C: God, We come before you, desire your transforming power in us.

L: God, let your People receive the gifts brought by people who have disabilities.

C: God, We come before you, desire your transforming power in us.

L: God, let us recognize the beauty of God's creating hand in each person, regardless of any human limitations we may have.

C: God, We come before you, desire your transforming power in us.

L: God of reconciliation, unite all of us in praise for making each of us the special person we are.

C: God, We come before you, desire your transforming power in us.

Hymn ... Lord of Life and Lord of Nations, Giving Peace, You make us One

Unison (♩ = 84)

The musical score is written for unison in 3/4 time with a tempo of quarter note = 84. It consists of three systems of music, each with a vocal line and a piano accompaniment line. The key signature has one sharp (F#). The lyrics are as follows:

1. LORD of life and LORD of na - tions, giv - ing peace, you make us one:
2. Lengths of love be - yond all mea - sure, heights of love which now do call,
3. Vi - sions new and an - cient dream - ing see the love be - yond all death;

heart of flesh for heart of stone, break the walls of all di - vi - sion. Your
breadth of love as room for all, depths of love where hide the trea - sure, through
new the heav - ens, new the earth: prom - ise of the king - dom com - ing. Through

king - dom come, with this its sign: our song this prayer: let peace now reign.
Christ, our Way, we find true peace, a world made whole in God's em - brace.
Christ the wounds of all this world in God's own peace will then be healed.

Words: Anthony Kelly, Australia
Music: *GOD OF PEACE*; Christopher Willcock, Australia
Words by permission of Anthony Kelly CSSR.
Music by permission of Christopher Willcock.

Ephesians 2:14; Revelation 21:1-4

Prayers of the People

L: We pray for people who are blind and cannot see and for those who can see but are blind to people around them.

C: God, in your mercy help us to reach each other.

L: For people who move slowly because of accident, illness, or disability; and for those who move too fast.

C: God, in your mercy help us to work together.

L: For people who are deaf and cannot hear, and for those who can hear but who ignore the cries of others.

C: God, in your mercy help us to respond to each other.

L: For people who learn slowly, for people who learn in different ways, and for people who learn quickly and easily but often choose ignorance.

C: God, in your mercy help us to grow in your Wisdom.

L: For people who have chronic illness for which there is no known cure or relief, and for people who live in unholy fear of developing a chronic illness.

C: God, in your mercy help us to see each other with your eyes.

L: For people who think they are worthless and beyond your love, and for people who think they don't need your love.

C: God, in your mercy help us to accept your love.

L: For people who feel isolated by their disabilities, and also for people who contribute to create that sense of isolation.

C: God, in your mercy help us to change our lives.

L: For all people in your creation, who may learn to respect each other and learn how to live together in your peace.

C: God, in your mercy bind us together.

L: Loving God, you teach us that the power of the Holy Spirit means more than any human limitation or weakness. By surrendering to your will, may we bear witness to the truth that the source of our human dignity is not the outward condition of the body, but our likeness to the creator.

C: God, in your mercy, inspire us to witness the human dignity of our sisters and brothers.

Prayer

Our creator of the disabled, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom values Love, Peace, Justice and inclusion to be engraved in our hearts. Forgive us for being insensible and exclusive communities. Lead us not to be tempted and attracted by the theologies and ideologies that promote hate and discrimination against fellow beings. Deliver us from the evil schools of thought and help us to be part of the reformed community. For yours is this world, the people and all creation forever and ever. **Amen.**

Hymn ... He Came Singing Love

Unison (♩ = 104)

1. He came sing-ing love and he lived sing-ing love; he died, sing - ing
 2. He came sing-ing faith and he lived sing-ing faith; he died, sing - ing
 3. He came sing-ing hope and he lived sing-ing hope; he died, sing - ing
 4. He came sing-ing peace and he lived sing-ing peace; he died, sing - ing

love. He a - rose in si - lence. For the love to go on we must
 faith. He a - rose in si - lence. For the faith to go on we must
 hope. He a - rose in si - lence. For the hope to go on we must
 peace. He a - rose in si - lence. For the peace to go on we must

make it our song: you and I be the sing-ers.

Words: Colin A. Gibson, New Zealand
 Music: *SINGING LOVE*; Colin A. Gibson, New Zealand

Ephesians 2:17-18

Prayer

O Creator God, we are your people. We look to the future with optimism and with faith in You, as we pursue our call to provide justice and fullness of life for all people with disabilities.

We pray that every man, woman and child may develop their potential and meet You in themselves and in one another.

May we offer our mind and souls to your will; transform our community as a totally welcoming community, with You as our centre, joined hand in hand with our sisters and brothers. We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.

Offertory**Benediction**

L: Let us go forth; understand and affirm that the image of God dwells in all God's creation.

Let us go forth; understand and affirm that the disabled body of Christ on the Cross calls us as a community to serve the world with love and justice.

Let us go forth; understand and affirm the Holy Spirit enables us to make the Church and society more inclusive and accessible.

The blessings of the Triune God be with us all till we meet again.

All: Amen

Greetings of Peace

L: The peace of the Lord be always with you.

C: **And also with you.**

(Everyone is invited to give each other a sign of peace!)



Guidelines for preparing sermons

1. Almost 60 per cent of the world's 650 million persons with disabilities live in Asia and the Pacific according to the United Nations' (UN) estimates. This is equal to some 400 million persons with disabilities in the region who need accompanying in realizing their human rights. (UNESCAP Fact Sheet, <http://www.unescap.org/esid/psis/FactSheets.pdf>)
2. The Bible speaks about diversity; it is a gift of God, gift from God. (Gen. 11:1-9) Therefore people with disabilities are also part of God's creation. Their presence shows the plurality of human beings and God's creation.
3. The Gospel according to St. John 9:1-12 where the disciples of Jesus raise the question about the connection between suffering and disabilities; Jesus refused to accept the personal sin theory but he indirectly emphasised on the sin of the community.

4. We should see the otherness of others. Therefore we need to prepare ourselves to see how God is using the people with disabilities for His glory.
5. The people with disabilities are regarded as people with lack of faith. Their weakness is not caused by their lack of faith. Paul witnesses God's grace in his weakness. (2 Cor. 12:9)
6. Churches without the disabled people are the disabled Churches. We are called to build friendly, inclusive and accessible communities of all God's people.

*You are encouraged to make a special Asia Sunday
offering and contribute to
CCA's Asia Solidarity Relief Fund.*

CCA Bank Account Details

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