

China, Hong Kong, Macau

Our starting point is the love of God, or the God of love. Behind all creation is love. Love is the key to all the mysteries of existence. God's love moves God to create, to teach, to forgive, to save and to sanctify so that more and more people may find the source of energy of this love. God's ultimate goal is to create a universe of love, a world of love, in which a human community lives by the principle of voluntary mutual love. God is not a steamroller or a bulldozer, crushing or clearing away people's will and freedom. God's will is love's will, a will-to-fellowship. God created humanity in God's own image. The very Trinity tells us that God is a community of love.

Bishop K.H. Ting

China

(People's Republic of China)

The Chinese character for peace, *wa*, means harmony. It derives from the combination of two words: rice and mouth. When every mouth has enough rice and no one is hungry, then truly there is peace.



*S t a t i s t i c s***Population:** 1.3 billion**Government:** One-party communist state**Language:** Standard Chinese or Mandarin, Yue (Cantonese) and other dialects; also Tibetan, Mongolian, Manchu, Korean, Japanese, English, Russian and more than 170 other languages and dialects**Literacy:** 86%**Religion:** Officially atheist, Daoist (Taoist), Confucian, Buddhist, Muslim, Christian 9%**WCC member churches:** China Christian Council*H i s t o r y*

For most of its recorded history Chinese civilization has led the world in the arts and sciences. As a political and cultural entity, China traces its roots back to the Xia dynasty, which began around 2000 BC, after which a series of dynasties ruled parts of what became China, some of which lasted for several centuries. From the fourteenth to the seventeenth century, China was the most advanced civilization on earth. Portuguese explorers settled in Macau during the sixteenth century, and British colonizers arrived in Hong Kong during the eighteenth century.

Civil wars weakened China during the nineteenth century, and in 1911 the final dynasty was overthrown by nationalists who instituted a republic. Over the next decades, however, China was invaded by Japan and again torn apart by civil war.

In 1949 communist forces under the leadership of Mao Zedong took the country from the nationalists and the beginnings of the present Chinese regime were proclaimed. (Many of the nationalist leadership fled to the Chinese island of Taiwan, where they established a rival government. This is still a major source of tension with China.) Since 1949 various political, cultural and economic "reform" movements have often had disastrous results. The Great Leap Forward campaign, begun in 1958, resulted in some 20 million deaths from malnutrition. During the Cultural Revolution of 1966-76, millions were killed for ideological reasons, schools were closed, property was confiscated, and many millions more were forced to relocate or work in labour camps.

Mao died in 1976. Deng Xiaoping came to power in 1977 with a new vision for China's economic development that opened the world's largest country to market forces and a form of economic capitalism while retaining communist political ideology and institutions. In 1987 students demonstrating for democratic reforms were massacred by government troops in Tiananmen Square in Beijing.

Officially, the country is atheist, although Taoism and Buddhism are the traditional religions, and Confucianism has provided an influential philosophical world-view. Christianity was initially brought to China around the seventh century by Nestorians and lasted about two centuries. In the 16th century, Roman Catholic missionaries from Portugal arrived and began to make an impression on China. It was not until the nineteenth century that Protestants developed a significant missionary presence.

In 1949, with the establishment of the People's Republic, all churches and institutions receiving foreign funds were registered by the government, all foreign missionaries were expelled and by 1954 Protestant churches had begun what was known as the Three Self Patriotic Movement (self-government, self-support, self-propagation) (TSPM). This movement made it clear to government that the church was working and living within "the overall climate and necessary discipline of patriotism". It had its critics inside and outside China, but the TSPM helped ensure the church's survival. The Catholic Patriotic Association, which held its first national congress in 1957, was a parallel Roman Catholic body that experienced a split when an underground church was formed which remained loyal to the Vatican.

During the Cultural Revolution all churches and church-related colleges were closed, and the church was forced to go underground. After Deng Xiaoping assumed power, the Communist Party of China (CCP) repudiated some of its past policies, promised greater freedom to the people and allowed religious liberalization. This marked the beginning of what later came to be known as Christian fever, an

expression that by 1990 was used even in official publications. There were then nearly 6,000 open churches in China, some 15,000 meeting places and 5 million members. The Catholic Church continued to function apart from Rome.

Paradoxically, the persecution of churches during the Cultural Revolution did much for church union. The emerging church eschewed denominational labels and became united as the China Christian Council (CCC) in 1980, which operated as both a council of churches and a national Protestant church. The TSPM and CCC continue as one. In 1991 the CCC joined the World Council of Churches.

The CCP has officially recognized five religions: Taoism, Buddhism, Islam, Protestantism and Catholicism. Today, Christians are generally allowed to practise their faith openly, although there has been some continued persecution of individuals and groups. Church leaders say there is rapid growth of religion, with more than 100 million religious adherents in China. Estimates of the numbers of Protestant Christians vary wildly from 10 million to 80 million. Most reliable figures place the number at around 16 million.

One of the Chinese church's important links with the outside world is the Amity Foundation, set up in 1984 and largely managed by Christians. The foundation manages a number of projects in health care and rural development. Amity enables the Chinese church to receive outside assistance for social welfare projects without compromising its principle of self-support. The foundation has printed more than 30 million Bibles to date.

Hong Kong

(Hong Kong Special Administrative Region)

Statistics

Population: 7 million

Government: Special administrative region (SAR) of China, with some economic and political autonomy

Language: Cantonese; also English and others



Literacy: 85%

Religion: Confucian, Chinese Buddhist 66%, Christian 10%, Muslim 2%

WCC member churches: Hong Kong Council of the Church of Christ in China

History

Bordering China and the South China Sea, Hong Kong was a British protectorate from 1841, when it was ceded to the UK by China until 1997, when Hong Kong Island, Kowloon Peninsula and the New Territories on the mainland were returned to Chinese sovereignty. Since then, Hong Kong citizens and the churches have been dealing with the unique challenges of the "one country, two systems" policy under which the Special Administrative Region (SAR) was established. Despite many underlying changes, day-to-day life in Hong Kong remains remarkably similar to what it was before the handover. Religious freedom also remains basically the same.

Christians in Hong Kong represent about 10 per cent of one of the most densely populated areas of the world. They are evenly divided between Protestants and Roman Catholics. Other major religions are Buddhism, Taoism, Islam and Confucianism, and no single religion has a majority. The Christian church continues to be strong in its traditional ministry in evangelism and church growth. Many churches and Christian organizations also have significant links with partner churches and agencies in mainland China.

The churches have recently renewed their commitment to issues of poverty and education in

Hong Kong. Christians are concerned about the widening gap between rich and poor as the SAR tries to maintain its economic prosperity within a fluctuating Asian economy. Christians also have an integral role in educational reform as sponsors of over half of Hong Kong's local schools.

Macau

(Macau Special Administrative Region)

Statistics



Population: 450,000

Government: Special administrative region of China

Language: Cantonese; also Portuguese

Literacy: 85%

Religion: Confucian, Buddhist 13%, Christian 7% (mostly Roman Catholic)

WCC member churches: None

History

Macau comprises a small peninsula of China and three islands. The Portuguese colonized Macau in the middle of the sixteenth century as the very first far eastern European colony. One of the richest and most decadent cities of the world during the seventeenth century, in 1987 it became a Chinese territory under Portuguese rule, and in 1999 it reverted to China as a special administrative region with a high degree of autonomy on all matters except foreign affairs and defence.

Christian mission in Macau began in the 1600s within the context of the broader cultural encounter between East and West. It was the gateway for missionary enterprise, Roman Catholics and Protestants alike. Noted missionaries included the Jesuits Mateo Ricci and Francis Xavier. The Ruins of St Paul's are Macau's most recognizable landmark, and bear vivid testimony to the vision and labour of the Jesuits. Today, most Christians in Macau are Roman Catholic.

Protestant missionary Robert Morrison arrived in Macau in 1807, followed by American Southern Baptists and other missionary societies and individuals in the mid-nineteenth century. The Protestant community in Macau is small, as Protestant churches are not officially recognized by the government and there is little local pastoral leadership. As a result, ecumenical efforts are often undermined by lack of mutual understanding, although there is some collaboration between Anglicans and Roman Catholics.

INTERCESSIONS

Give thanks for:

- o The survival of Christians and Christian churches even though they have been persecuted.
- o The Christian Conference of Asia, which has its headquarters in Hong Kong.
- o Those who struggle for human rights against great odds.
- o Christians meeting in house churches.

- o Growing congregations.
- o The China Christian Council, the Amity Foundation, the Hong Kong Council of Churches.
- o Ancient Chinese pottery and works in jade.
- o Chinese characters, and the illuminating ink strokes of Chinese calligraphy.
- o Peking duck, sweet and sour sauce, and snake soup.
- o Those with a concern for the poor and disadvantaged.

Pray for:

- o Those suffering unemployment in cities and those who are unable to find homes.
- o The rural poor, and those forced to labour in the countryside.
- o Refugees from North Korea.
- o Women and female children, who do not have equal status or opportunity.
- o Those suffering from forced sterilizations, abortions and infanticide.
- o A spirit of compassion, tolerance and acts of love for new arrivals in Hong Kong from mainland China.
- o Marginalized groups such as the aged, disabled, single parent families, and migrant workers.
- o Educational reforms, that they may bring about a holistic approach to learning.
- o Miners and all those who face hazardous working conditions.
- o A reduction in the amount of pollution and environmental damage.

PRAYERS

(1)

O God our Father,

We thank you for daily bread.

We thank you for the providence

which has sustained this restless city

where millions have found their home.

The restlessness has sapped our strength,

and often tempted our eyes towards the vulgarity of life.

But we thank you for the hard-earned daily bread

which sustains our bodies and our pride.

In the middle of rejoining China's mainstream destiny

we come to you with trembling hope and fearful joy.

Lord of the churches, make us one.
 Help us to love one another as you have loved us,
 so that all may come to know we are yours.
 Lord of history, make us strong.
 Help us to live this day as if it is tomorrow,
 so that the past no longer binds the future.
 May your will be done in this city.
 May you be pleased with this land and this people
 on which to build a concrete token of your kingdom.
 In Jesus' name.

(2)

O God,
 We thank you that you have been good to us
 during this past year.
 We pray to you,
 make us a new creation;
 renew our hearts, minds, and spirits and,
 in the likeness of Jesus,
 may we share your goodness and love
 with many more
 in the days and months to come.

(3)

We are going home to many who cannot read,
 so, Lord, make us to be Bibles,
 so that those who cannot read the book
 can read it in us.

(4)

My Lord is the source of Love; I, the river's course.
 Let my God's love flow through me. I will not obstruct it.
 Irrigation ditches can water but a portion of the field;
 the great Yangtze River can water a thousand acres.
 Expand my heart, O Lord, that I may love yet more people.

(5)
 O God, Father of light,
 Source of life,
 Author of grace and Founder of the world,
 Fount of all knowledge,
 Treasure of all wisdom,
 Instiller of holiness and Teacher of pure prayer,
 kindly Helper of the soul;
 you give the weak of soul who trust in you
 those things which the angels long to see.
 Even now, Master and Lord,
 enlighten the eyes of our understanding
 by the visitation of your Holy Spirit
 and sanctify us through and through in body, soul and spirit.

(6)
 As they face this day, O God,
 find those who are lost,
 separated from those they love,
 crossing unknown borders,
 without a country or home,
 not knowing where to turn:
**Find them, God, who always seek for the lost,
 and cover them safely as a hen covers her chickens.**

As they face this day, O God,
 stand among the ones in refugee camps around the world,
 in the hunger and despair,
 in the crowds and the emptiness,
 in the wet and the thirstiness:
**Be their hope and their strength
 in the crying out for justice
 and open the ears of the world to hear their cries.**

As they face this day, O God,
 may those who live with us,
 uprooted from their homelands,
 find a new home
 where their history is respected,

their gifts and graces celebrated
and their fear departed from them.
**May we be their home,
may we be the ones who open our hearts in welcome.**

As we face this day, O God,
sing to us your song of encouragement,
paint for us your bright pictures of a new world
where people need not flee from wars and oppression,
where no one lacks a country or a home,
and where we are all part of your new creation.
**For we long to be your people, in spirit and in truth.
We pray in the name of Jesus the Christ,
who knew the life of a refugee.**

(7)
O Lord our God,
Enlighten your church,
That wherever it may be,
It will never seek for its interests
But will only serve you faithfully.
Grant your church wisdom and courage,
That it may break down all boundaries,
So that humankind will become one again.
In Jesus' name.

(8)
O Lord Jesus,
Please abide with me.
Dispel my loneliness!
No one can be my companion forever,
But you are the Lord who is everywhere,
Present at all times.
You, only, are my dear companion and saviour.

In the long dark night,
along the silent shadowy pathways,
I beg you to grasp my hand.
When others have forgotten me,
please remember me in eternity!
In the name of Jesus.

(9)

Lord,
you will come again, this is your promise.
We pray that you give us wakeful hearts,
and protect us from delusion.
We also pray that you give us wise minds
so that we can be loyal and knowledgeable servants,
with whom, at your coming,
you will be well pleased.

(10)

Lord, you are the road to eternal life,
to whom else can we turn?
Lord, besides you there is none to save us.
We come to you.

(11)

Father, from whose loins I sprung,
Mother, on whose breast I hung,
Tender were ye, and ye fed,
Now upheld, now gently led.
Eyes untiring watched my way;
Often in your arms I lay.
How could I repay your love,
Vast as arch of heaven above?



Brunei, Malaysia, Singapore

We all drink from one water.
 We all breathe from one air.
 We rise from one ocean
 And we live under one sky.
 Remember,
 We are one.

The newborn baby cries the same.
 The laughter of children is universal.
 Everyone's blood is red
 And our hearts beat the same song.
 Remember,
 We are one.

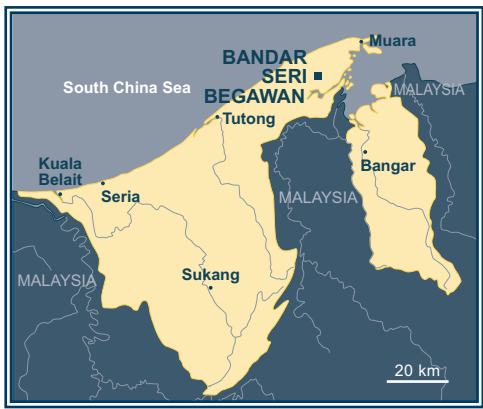
We are all brothers and sisters.
 Only one family, only one earth.
 Together, we live
 And together we die.
 Remember,
 We are one.

Peace be on you,
 Brothers and Sisters,
 Peace be on you.

Anwar Fazal

Brunei

Brunei (Sultanate of Brunei)



Statistics

- Population:** 365,000
- Government:** Self-governing constitutional monarchy
- Language:** Malay and English; also Chinese, Kedayan, Dusun, Melanau, Iban
- Literacy:** 88%
- Religion:** Muslim 67%, Buddhist 9%, Christian

7%, Chinese folk religion 4%, Confucianist 2%, Hindu 1%, Other 2%

WCC member churches: None

History

Brunei borders Malaysia's Borneo territory on the South China Sea. Its influence peaked between the fifteenth and seventeenth centuries, when its control extended over coastal areas of northwest Borneo and the southern Philippines as an independent traditional Islamic monarchy or sultanate. By 1888 its power had declined due to internal strife over royal ascendancy, colonial expansion and piracy. As a result, it became a British protectorate, and in 1905 it was a dependency. Japan occupied Brunei during the Second World War; it was liberated by Australia in 1945. The sultan subsequently regained control over internal affairs in 1959, but declined to join the Malaysian Federation in 1963. Britain retained responsibility for the state's defence and foreign affairs until 1984, when the sultanate became fully independent. The same family has ruled Brunei for more than six centuries. Brunei has one of the highest per capita incomes in Asia, benefiting from large petroleum and natural gas fields, and the sultan is believed to be one of the richest men in the world.

The Asian financial crisis in 1997–98, coupled with fluctuations in the price of oil, created uncertainty and instability in Brunei's economy. Current estimates of oil production suggest that Brunei's reserves will be used up by 2020. Because petroleum is the main product of Brunei, a wide variety of items, including food, must be imported. Even though Brunei has large per capita wealth, most of the money stays with the sultan and does not go to the people. Women do not have equal rights with men.

Islam is the official religion of Brunei, with more than half the population identifying themselves as Muslim. The government does not allow proselytizing. In 1991 Roman Catholic priests and nuns were expelled from the country. There are efforts by some in Brunei to create an Islamic state.

Malaysia



Statistics

Population: 23.5 million

Government: Constitutional monarchy

Language: Malay and English; also Chinese, Tamil, Javanese, Iban and over 170 others

Literacy: 83%

Religion: Muslim 48%, Chinese folk religion 24%, Christian 8%, Hindu 7%, Buddhist 7%, Other 6%

WCC member churches: Methodist Church in Malaysia, Protestant Church in Sabah

History

Malaysia consists of 13 states, 11 on the Malayan peninsula (West Malaysia) and two on the north coast of the island of Borneo (East Malaysia). In the eighteenth century the area was controlled by the British. The Malay states were brutally conquered by Japan during the Second World War. By 1957 the 11 peninsular states achieved independence as the Federation of Malaya, and in 1963 the two states on the island of Borneo joined them to form the Federation of Malaysia, which reverted to Malaysia in 1963 when Singapore withdrew.

Approximately two-thirds of Malaysians are ethnic Malay, 20 per cent are ethnic Chinese and 9 per cent are ethnic Indian. The remainder are indigenous tribal peoples and migrant workers from all over Asia. Such ethnic diversity has led to rioting and violence over the years, and to discrimination based on ethnicity. At the moment, however, the area is relatively stable. The booming economy of the 1990s was tempered by the Asian financial crisis of 1997, although Malaysia

was not affected as dramatically as some other countries.

Sunni Islam is the official religion of Malaysia, although freedom of religion is guaranteed in the constitution. In some areas there has been a resurgence of Islamic fundamentalism, leading to tensions between religious groups. There are strict laws against proselytization of Muslims and against their apostasy, as well as restrictions on the sale and distribution of Christian materials in native languages.

Roman Catholicism came to Malaysia with the Portuguese during the early sixteenth century, and Francis Xavier spent several years in Malaysia during the 1540s. Protestantism arrived with the Dutch during the seventeenth century, although Protestant churches did not spread to the indigenous populations until the London Missionary Society began work in 1814. There are several ecumenical and interfaith groups, including the Malaysian Consultative Council of Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism and Sikhism; the Malaysia Council of Churches (MCC); and the Christian Federation of Malaysia, which consists of the MCC, Roman Catholic representatives, and the National Evangelical Christian Fellowship.

Singapore

(Republic of Singapore)



Statistics

- Population:** 4.3 million
- Government:** Parliamentary republic since 1965
- Language:** Malay; also Chinese, English, Tamil, Malayalam, Punjabi, Javanese and Hindi
- Literacy:** 89%
- Religion:** Taoist 43%, Muslim 18%, Buddhist 15%, Christian 12%, Hindu 5%
- WCC member churches:** Methodist Church in Singapore

History

Singapore is a city-state located on an island at the southern tip of the Malay peninsula. As is the case for neighbouring countries, it has been inhabited for centuries by tribal peoples. During the fourteenth century it came under the rule of the Malacca sultanate. The British gained control of the island in 1819 through formal treaties with the sultan and rulers of Singapore, making it part of the Straits Settlement, a Crown Colony comprised of Singapore, Malacca and Penang. During the Second World War Singapore was occupied by the Japanese, after which it returned to British rule. In 1959 it was released from British rule, and from 1961 to 1963 was part of neighbouring Malaysia. Since then it has become an economically successful nation under very stable, authoritarian rule.

Singapore is driven by its economy, which is a highly developed free market, heavily dependent on exports. During the 1980s and 1990s its open business environment, low inflation and low unemployment, and energetic and educated workforce made Singapore an enviable model of political stability and financial success. Singapore boasts one of the highest gross domestic products per capita in the world.

However, stability and success have come with a price. The government of Singapore, with its emphasis on maintaining prosperity and harmony among its ethnic and religious groups, has suppressed many of the rights of individuals and religious institutions to voice the need for economic or political change. The Societies Act requires all religious groups to be registered and scrutinized

by the government, and those groups that are deemed detrimental to public welfare and order may be deregistered and banned. The constitution of Singapore permits restrictions on the freedom of the press, and has been interpreted broadly to censor political opposition and criticism.

The net effect of Singapore's political climate on religious expression has been to promote harmony between traditions, curtail proselytism and promote charitable work, but at the expense of the church's mission to voice its critique of political, economic and social structures.

In 1987 the Christian Conference of Asia (CCA), which had its headquarters in Singapore, was "dissolved" by the government and its expatriate staff were expelled. No real reason was given for the decision. A news release by the government at the time accused the CCA of breaching an agreement "not to indulge in any political activity or allow its funds to be used for political purposes". The CCA, according to the release, had been using Singapore as a base of support for "liberation movements" in other Asian countries

and it had been providing covert help to subversive elements in Singapore. The CCA worked from dispersed offices in the region until 1993, when the head office reopened in Hong Kong.

Approximately three-quarters of the population of Singapore are ethnically Chinese, and Chinese religions, including Taoism, are the most prevalent. Christianity arrived in Singapore in the early sixteenth century, when Portuguese Jesuit missionaries brought Roman Catholicism. The Dutch brought Protestantism in the mid-seventeenth century, which suppressed the Roman Catholics. Today, Christians belong primarily to Roman Catholic, Methodist, Brethren, Anglican, Church of God, and independent churches. The 1990s saw an increase in charismatic movements throughout many of the established churches. The National Council of Churches of Singapore is an ecumenical association of Protestant and Orthodox churches that has its roots in the Council of Churches of Malaysia and Singapore, established in 1948.

INTERCESSIONS

Give thanks for:

- o The amazing diversity of life. There are many species of plants and animals which are found in these countries and nowhere else.
- o Better economies and opportunities for employment.
- o The religious and cultural diversity of Singapore, and for the many traditions in Singapore which make up the body of Christ.

Pray for:

- o Religious groups who are oppressed despite official freedom of religion.
- o Chinese inhabitants of Brunei who have been denied citizenship and face discrimination.
- o The poor of Brunei, that they gain access to the means necessary to sustain and nourish themselves.
- o Peace among the many ethnic groups within these countries.
- o The protection and encouragement of religious freedom.
- o The respectful use of natural resources and sustainable practices.
- o Women, who in some of these countries are treated as second-class citizens.

PRAYERS

(1)

Lord Jesus,
you did not have a house to call your own,
you stayed in homes that were not yours,
you know what it's like for us to be squatters,
to fear angry grunting bulldozers ready to raze our houses
standing on land we cannot call our own.

You fasted in the wilderness as the vultures circled,
you felt the pangs of hunger as days turned into weeks.
You know how we feel when our stomachs groan,
not knowing when our next meal will come,
as we watch our children grow underweight.

You walked under the relentless desert sun,
you felt the scorching heat down your back,
you know how hot it gets as the sun beats down,
making us dizzy as our metal roofs burn,
the sweat trickling down our brows.

And yet you are somehow present in our midst,
you are among us amid the squalor and filth,
you know how we live – in despair and in suffering
as the sun rises, another hard day unfolds
and we toil to earn our daily bread.

Lord Jesus, who shall we go to?
Do not forsake us.
You are the bread of life, our shining star.
In the darkness of our hopeless lives,
won't you light up a ray of hope?

(2)

I want every child in this world to be happy
I want fathers to nurture their children
and mothers to bring them up to be strong and gentle.
I want my eyes opened to the reality of other people,
to hear what they are not able to articulate.
I want to add to an atmosphere of trust,

where people who were deeply hurt when they were young
 can heal, recuperate and recover.
 I want to see justice run like a river,
 bringing healing and peace to the nations.
 I want to sing the songs of my sisters and brothers.
 I want to tell their stories, dance their dances and recite their poetry.
 I want to add my voice to the resonance
 that conveys what each person on the face of the earth wants the rest of
 the world to know.
 Her vision. His dreams. Her strength. His gifts. Her hope. His yearning.
 Her anxiety. His fears. Her grief. His sadness. Her indignation. His
 anger. Her determination. His striving. Her joys. His excitement. Her
 discoveries. His dawns.
 I want the eyes of my heart to see the grace of God
 that is present to me in every child, woman and man I meet.
 I want to be able to see differently, to think differently, to live kindly, to
 walk humbly, to serve graciously and gratefully.
 Come, Lord Jesus. Come always and save me –
 that I may want what you want,
 that I may live in you, that I may be completely holy.

(3)

Where families are fractured by domestic upheavals,
 and children forced onto the streets to fight for survival,
 where more resources are spent on arms and destruction
 and less attention paid to sickness and starvation:

Come, Holy Spirit
heal our wounds
renew the whole creation!

Where the acquisition of things has become an obsession
 and the worth of human beings is measured by their possessions,
 where our air, trees and seas are besieged by pollution
 and purblind mercenary greed threatens our environment:

Come, Holy Spirit
heal our wounds
renew the whole creation!

Where countries are split apart by communalism and racism
 and innocent blood is spilt by wanton acts of terrorism,

where internecine warfare sets nation against nation
and a nuclear holocaust looms ominous on our horizon:

Come, Holy Spirit

heal our wounds

Renew the whole creation!

(4)

We praise you for the beauty we see around us,
for the infinite variety of your creation –
the skies, the mountains, the valleys,
the plains, the rivers and the seas.

The bounty of your creation adds richness and providence
to our daily life.

We thank you for the gift of life,
and for the opportunities we have to share in your purposes
as stewards of creation.

Give us grace through your life-giving spirit
never to turn back on our responsibility
for the preservation of your creation.

Your Son, our Lord, came to our world in the form of Jesus,
that we might more clearly see your love in action
and your power over evil, sin and death.

Teach and inspire us Lord,
never to be afraid of the power of those
who are greedy and abusive of the resources
of your world and of others.

With the love of Jesus in our hearts,
we can transform every human situation
into what is good and acceptable in your sight.

Loving God, as we look to the future,
increase our faith and confidence
in your work in history.

You will take care of the poor and the powerless;
your prophets will speak against injustices;
and your people will embrace each other in love
because of Jesus Christ.

We pray only
that the church will be more courageous than cautious;

that the church will not remain silent
 when people are suffering;
 that the church will not "pass by on the other side"
 when the wounded earth is waiting to be healed.

We praise you, Creator God, that you still make all
 things new through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

(5)

Somewhere in this
 hopeless whirlpool of life,
 a hand extends to help.
 Praise God! Amen.

(6)

We thank you, God, for the blessings you have given this country,
 for peace and governmental stability,
 the riches of the soil and the sea.
 But, O Father God,
 may you keep your children
 from all selfishness and from all laziness.
 Do not allow us to be content answering the calls
 requiring little sacrifice.
 Help your church to carry the gospel to the poor
 and to care for those sitting in the shadow of sin.

(7)

Lord Jesus, open our eyes
 so that we can recognize the injustice around us
 that is not always obvious.
 May we be moved by compassion for the victims of injustice
 and act in accordance with your will,
 to defend the poorest and to save the children in need.

Lord God, you feel so strongly about the needy, the afflicted, the weak and
 the imprisoned –
 and you love them so deeply.
 Inspire the leaders among us
 to uphold the rights of the downtrodden
 and to serve with fairness, justice and integrity.

(8)

"Enlarge the place of your tent,
stretch your tent curtains wide,
do not hold back;
lengthen your cords,
strengthen your stakes." Isaiah 54:2 (NIV)

O Lord, help us to stretch out our capacity and our imagination.
Help us to be open and listening servants.
Help us to hold hands, widen our circle and be inclusive.

Let the ecumenical space be a vast tent and a safe space:
where the communities' needs and concerns are shared,
listened to and discussed,
where ways forward are envisioned,
that our journeys will be guided by your word.

Let not our personal limitations and incapacities
restrict our perception and actions.
Let our collective wisdom lead us to discern your will for humanity:
that we may serve you better.

Help us to have resilient long and strong cords
to keep the tent wide and open.
Bless our churches and ecumenical organizations –
that they be vibrant spaces,
accountable and effective mechanisms in serving you
and your children.

Help us to have strong stakes, driven deep to hold up our wide tents.
to have a deep understanding of the issues that affect peoples lives,
to be rooted deep in your faith,
to hold fast to your word.

That rain or shine,
our churches and organizations provide the safe and loving space.
Through storm or calm,
we are in fellowship, sharing your unrestricted and overflowing love.
That united and acting together
the world will know Jesus through us.