



Lift up your eyes and look around; they all gather together, they come to you; your sons shall come from far away, and your daughters shall be carried on their nurses' arms. Then you shall see and be radiant; your heart shall thrill and rejoice, because the abundance of the sea shall be brought to you, the wealth of the nations shall come to you.
(Isaiah 60: 4-5)



Anglican Churches meet to fulfill mission for migrants and refugees

In accordance with the 14th Anglican Consultative Council's Resolution 31, representatives of Anglican Churches in different countries met in Hong Kong last January 12 – 14 to discuss the revival of the Anglican Refugee and Migrants Network (ARMN)

Representatives of Anglican Churches in Hong Kong, Taiwan, South Korea and the United States together with Anglican Church-backed non-government organizations, Mission For Migrant Workers (MFMW) and the Asia Pacific Mission for Migrants (APMM), conducted a fruitful discussion to design the plans and future operations of the ARMN and looked forward to the full operations of the network in the near future..

Hosted by the HK Sheng Kung Hui (Province of Hong Kong Anglican/Episcopal Church), the meeting

featured sharing of work on refugees and migrants by the participants and the finalization of the concept of the ARMN.

The ARMN was established as an officially accredited Anglican Communion Network through Resolution 39 of ACC-6 in 1984. The resolution was adopted in recognition of the growing issues of the growing number of migrants that time. However, there have been limited efforts to realize the envisaged work of the network through the years.

Thus, the ACC-14 in Jamaica issued Resolution 31 that welcomed the re-establishment of ARMN. Such a decision to revive the ARMN came from the context of the continuing deterioration of economies in the world and the breaking out of wars in various parts of the globe that have caused the

displacement – forced migration – of millions of people.

The ACC-14 also upheld the decision for the HKSKH to host the network and, thus, the meeting was held.

In attendance were: The Very Rev'd Andrew Chan of the St. John's Cathedral (Hong Kong), The Rt Rev'd David Lai of Taiwan Episcopal Church (Taiwan), Rev'd Joachim Kim of Towards Peace in Korea (South Korea), Ms. Deborah Stein of the Episcopal Migration Ministries (USA), Rev'd Dwight dela Torre (SJC, Hong Kong), Ms. Cynthia Abdon-Tellez of MFMW (Hong Kong) and Mr. Ramon Bultron of the HK-based regional group APMM.

Revd Peter Koon, Provincial Secretary of the HKSKH, Mr. Hessler Lee, Special Assistant to the Provincial Secretary

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of the HKSCH, and Mr. Aaron Ceradoy of APMM were also there to provide support for the meeting.

In his welcome remarks, Dean Andrew Chan stressed the importance of carrying out the ministry for migrants especially in the context of globalization. He called the meeting as the first step towards reviving the ARMN. "A small step towards a giant leap in the future," he remarked.

Sharing of experiences from countries present in the meeting further showed the importance of reviving the ARMN to strengthen and broaden the work of Anglican Churches on the concerns of refugees and migrant workers.

Reverend Kim explained the changing consciousness among Koreans due to the more multicultural society that results from the presence of migrants. Some of the major issues right now in South Korea include those of the non-documented migrant workers, issues arising from international marriages, and children borne from international marriages.

As specific services to migrants, he shared about the work of the Namyang-ju Migrant Worker's Welfare Center that include providing English lessons, helping non-documented workers seeking medical assistance, counseling and settlement of women migrants, and supporting returned migrant workers. He also introduced the Girls Friendly Society's U-mul-ga project for refugees from North Korea and suggested to have more concern and cooperation for it.

Ms. Deborah Stein, meanwhile, explained the work of the Episcopal Migration Ministries in the United States

– the arm of the Episcopal Church that responds to refugees and immigrants. The bulk of their work are focused on the sponsorship and resettlement of refugees from various countries such as Burma, Sudan, Liberia, Iraq and others who are recognized by the United States government.

She also talked about the information campaigns and education to the public about the plight of refugees and the urgency of providing help to them that the EMM conducts. On the advocacy front, The Episcopal Church (TEC) is engaged ecumenically in pushing for a comprehensive immigration reform bill in the United States.

The Rt. Revd David Lai, Bishop of the Taiwan Episcopal Church, relayed that most of the foreign workers in Taiwan come mainly from Southeast Asian countries like Indonesia, Philippines, Thailand and Vietnam. They are usually found in the construction industry, factories, nursing jobs and housekeeping. He noted the recent increase of Indonesian migrants in Taiwan as compared to the decline in the number of Filipino workers. Most of the migrants from Indonesia are Muslims but the Church tries its best to provide pastoral care for them.

Ms. Cynthia Abdon-Tellez, director of MFMW, shared the history of church-related initiatives to respond to the needs of migrant workers – mainly foreign domestic workers (FDWs) – in Hong Kong. She explained that the rapid increase of FDWs in Hong Kong is a direct result of the worsening economic conditions in sending countries like the Philippines and complemented by the boom of the economy in HK that created the need to bring in FDWs.

She narrated that the establishment of the MFMW in 1981 came from the cooperation between various Christian churches in Hong Kong that started with determining the condition and needs of migrant workers. The MFMW further deepened the understanding on the phenomenon of migration and later on broadened its services by establishing the Bethune House Migrant Women's Refuge as a temporary shelter for distressed women migrants.

Ms. Abdon-Tellez elaborated on the MFMW and its work that is under the framework of Crisis Intervention through Migrants Empowerment. In this frame, she said that the importance of service-providing groups such as the MFMW is emphasized but also, at the same time, the reality that empowerment of migrant workers is crucial in addressing their concerns is also highlighted. She also mentioned the cooperation that now exists among various service providers in Hong Kong under the umbrella of the Coalition of Service Providers for Ethnic Minorities (CSPM-HK).

Mr. Ramon Bultron of the Asia Pacific Mission for Migrants (APMM), meanwhile, shared the work of the group in the Asia-Pacific and Middle East regions. He emphasized on the regional and global advocacies, research and education work that APMM conducts on the concerns of migrant workers of different nationalities in order to help build and strengthen the movement of migrant workers, refugees and other displaced people for more effective actions on their rights and wellbeing.

APMM also engages in particular themes of work such as marriage migrants, undocumented migrant workers, domestic work as work and bilateral labour agreements and the ASEAN. Networks that include leading NGOs and grassroots organizations in the region and elsewhere have been formed by APMM around these themes.

From the sharings and discussions, the participants finalized the concept paper on the operations and programs of the ARMN. The concept paper will be submitted to the ACC and HKSCH for their perusal.

Participants to the consultation look forward to finally realizing the ARMN and advancing the work among refugees and migrants. Such a realization will indeed be the realization of the mission to be with the vulnerable and those in need.





HERSTORY

Putting a Face to the Case

Stories of Suffering, Struggle and Success



The story of Jofelyn

She is Jofelyn, 23 years old from Davao City, Philippines.

She is the 3rd among five children. Her mother is a teacher. When she was 13 years old, her father was laid off from the plywood factory job because he was a member of a Union and since then he has no work.

Before she came to Hong Kong, she worked for a Japanese/Canadian family doing domestic work for almost two years at a salary of Php2,500. They were kind but the salary was not enough.

She met a recruiter by the name of Perlita so she decided to try to work abroad. She was only told to pay the training fee which was Php6,500. When she signed the contract the salary was blank but later was told that her salary will be HK\$2,500 and that it would be increased as she improved her performance until she would get a full salary.

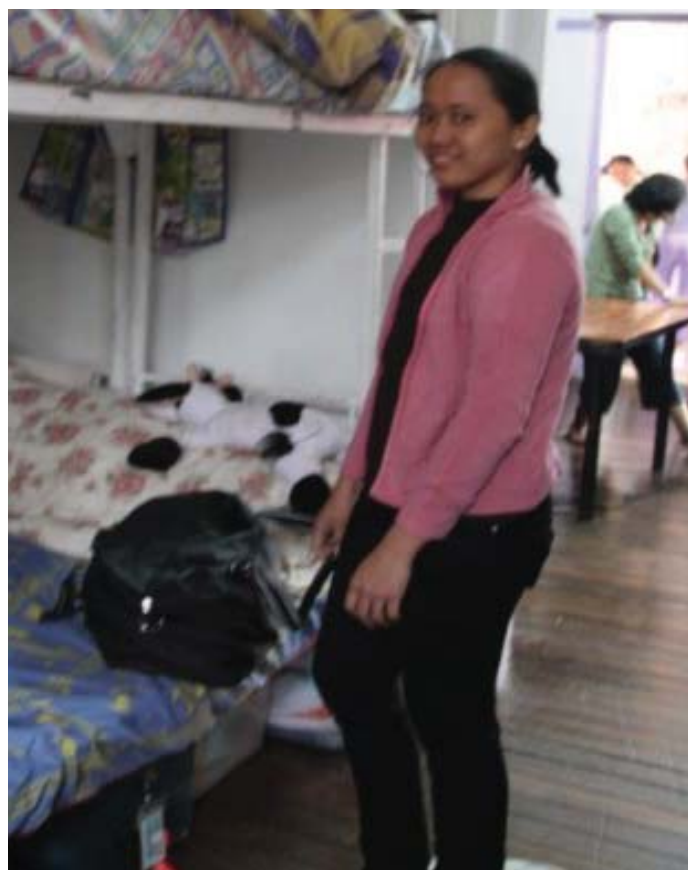
She arrived here last June 26, 2009. But there was another Filipina named Maryann she worked with. She experienced being hungry because food was

not enough, yet if there was leftover they cannot eat because the food is very spicy. Still, if there is no rice left, the female employer would not allow them to cook rice. They were underpaid as well. They have to sign a receipt that they received HK\$3,580 but were only given HK\$2,500.

After two months, she met a group of Filipinos in Kowloon Park who advised her to seek help from the Labour Department when she mentioned that she only received HK\$2,500.

But on October 26, the employer terminated her and Maryann's contracts. Their claims were not paid so they both sought help from the Mission For Migrant Workers for assistance and were referred to the shelter where they both stayed to pursue their claims at the Labour Tribunal.

After three long months of waiting without a job, Jofelyn and Maryanne reluctantly accepted the amount less than what they are entitled to because both of them want to go home and be with their families. They knew that if they will fight it will take longer.



They have found an employer but, with the existing Immigration Policy, they have to finish their labor case before they can process a new employment contract.

They realized that being a helper, one is not only discriminated but also abused verbally, physically and even accused of theft. That many are overworked and underpaid.

Nonetheless, staying at the Bethune House taught them many things in life. It taught them how to be strong, patient and be of help to one another.

When they come back to Hong Kong, they both said that they will be ready to face the challenges of being migrant worker and that they will continue working with other migrants and helping Bethune House.

The Visit of the Magi and the Subscript of Violence and the Hope for Liberation

OUR FAITH,
OUR
STRUGGLE



One of the highlights of The Midnight Eucharist at Christmas that never failed to fascinate me as a young boy was the three huge lanterns, often shaped as stars or comets, hung above the congregation, which move --- it was an honor among the young people to be given the task to pull them -- from above the main door of the church and stop above the altar or the Christmas Crib/Belen --- usually built behind the altar -- during the singing of the Gloria. These lanterns are withdrawn during the singing of the Closing Hymn on January 6, the Feast of Epiphany. Those familiar with the Bible will immediately recognize the lanterns as representing the magi/wise men from the East men who visited the Baby Jesus.

Many western churches celebrate this event on January 6. The Roman Catholic Church has transferred its celebration to the first Sunday after Christmas Day. The Orthodox churches on the other hand celebrate their Christmas,

not on the 25th of December but on the 6th of January.

The Visit of the Magi is celebrated by the church because the church recognizes them as representatives of pagan religion who through their knowledge of the movements of heavenly bodies have come to recognize the baby Jesus for what he really is -- hence his manifestation to the Gentiles -- his epiphany as savior of all humankind.

St. Matthew mentions they offered the Baby gold, frankincense, myrrh (Mt. 2: 11) recognizing his kingship, divinity and salvific death. The event foreshadows the bringing of the gentiles into the fold of the church.

But the story of the Visit of the Magi has subscripts of violence and deep longing for liberation that belie the seemingly innocuous story -- oh how we competed then to be given the role

of the three "kings" in our Christmas pageants.

St. Matthew tells us, "Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, saying, "Where is he who has been born king of the Jews? For we have seen his star in the East, and have come to worship him."

When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him" (Mt. 2:1-3)

Herod had all the right to be "...troubled and all Jerusalem with him." Herod was declared "King of the Jews" by grace of Roman Senate (40/39 BC). But it took him three more years of bitter fighting, helped by a Roman Legion, to conquer his own people before he can sit on his throne.

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MIGRANTE-MACAU CELEBRATES NEW YEAR'S DAY

MACAU CORNER



Around 60 members and guests attended the New Year's celebration of Migrante –Macau on 10th January 2010 at Green Court Park.

The event started with a thanksgiving prayer led by Letty Sumalabi

Lina Yamat, chairperson of Migrante Macau, welcomed all the members and

guests and thanked everyone for their continuous support to the organization. She is optimistic that the present membership of Migrante will continue to expand to serve its objective of looking after the well-being of overseas Filipinos in Macau.

A representative from the Mission for

Migrant Workers HK, Ms. Edwina Antonio was the guest speaker for that day.

Read as well as the written solidarity message of Migrante-HK chairperson Vicky Cabantac, which focused on the role that Migrante has to play in fighting for the rights and welfare of migrants in Macau. According to her, "Migrante must continue to strengthen its organization so that it could continue to represent the majority voice of migrant workers in Macau." That the anti-migrant policies of the Philippine and Macau governments continue to affect their working conditions in Macau and so they must continue to be vigilant in the face of these adversities.

The program committee also prepared some games and exchange gifts which everyone enjoyed. Snacks were shared by everyone as well. The victims of illegal recruitment were also present and they thanked everyone for their support while waiting for the Philippine government to act on their plight.

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Herod taxed his people heavily to support his massive and colossal building projects, among them the Temple of Jerusalem, several fortresses in strategic location e.g. Antonia, Alexandreion, Hyrcania, Sebaste, Machaerus, Masada and Herodion – where he was eventually buried: his grave was discovered some two or three years ago. He established military bases in Gaba, Galilee and in Esebonitis in Perea. He also gifted the emperor with lavish riches and sponsored an Olympic Games.

The people hated him, were restive and even prayed for his death because of his illegitimacy, violation of their faith traditions, and oppressive exploitation. But he kept them in check. He set up a massive spy network. According to

Josephus, Herod forbade meetings, travelling together were monitored and movements of peoples were observed. Those who were caught were punished severely and eventually put to death. He demanded loyalty oaths, compelling the people to make sworn declaration they would maintain friendly attitude to his rule. He got rid by every possible means those who refused. Some he sold off as slaves to slave traders defying the prohibitions of their faith.

His own family was not spared. He had three of his sons and two of his own wives and mothers-in-law assassinated on suspicion they were out to get rid of him. Hence when the wise men did not return to Herod as instructed, he tried to purge Bethlehem and the surrounding region of potential rivals. (2:16)

It was precisely against this

background of Herodian violence, exploitation and tyranny that the wise men arrived looking for the Real King of the Jews. It was precisely against this background of Herodian violence, exploitation and tyranny that the real KING not only of the Jews but of all, was revealed.

Rulers who deep in their own hearts and in the recesses of their consciences know the illegitimacy of their rules suffer paranoia and often result to unimaginable brutality and violence to just maintain power. The Filipino people have had their share of these experiences. But a people who are vigilant of their democratic rights will never allow their usurpation and curtailment. Organized Filipino migrants/OFW's the world over will never allow this to happen.



Bethune House Residents Celebrate the Holidays!

Once again, the Bethune House Migrant Women's Refuge celebrated Christmas and New Year's parties. On the 24th of December 2009, the residents of the shelter together with other migrants from different organizations rejoiced Christmas. The residents enjoyed the spirit

of Christmas through gift giving, singing Christmas carol and karaoke with dances and games.

The actual countdown started one minute before midnight on 31 December 2009, with gigantic numerical countdown display in LED lights, together with pyrotechnic effects.

This is the first time they enjoyed the countdown with thousands of visitors and local residents at the Hong Kong Cultural Centre in Tsim Sha Tsui.



MIGRANT FOCUS

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