

religion

Willa Mae Rice

From this pew

As one who was privileged to move across Asia a couple of years ago as a member of the Christian Causeway to Asia, I became quite aware of the extreme injustices inflicted against children and against Christians in some countries, and particularly in Korea, where my group spent its longest time slot.

"Who Are You and Who Are We," is the title of a piece which I read recently in the Asian Rights Advocate. It begins by saying, "You who are readers of the Asian Rights Advocate" are a select group of 1,100 lay Christians of many denominations who have shown genuine interest in the human rights situations of Korea and the Philippines.

You are mostly women and mostly mid-Western. You have a fine record of taking action when called upon. Among other accomplishments, your letterwriting has brought the needed pressure to Mattel Toy Co. to change its labor policies in Asia; prompted the postponement of an unbalanced, church sponsored tour to Korea, and helped motivate an investigative trip by P.E.N., an International to Korea in relation to jailed poets.

Your names have been brought together by the members of the Committee who are out telling the human rights stories in the churches and finding you! Some of you have found us by yourselves!

Who are we? We are you, too, but our core Church Committee on Human Rights in Asia is 40 northern Illinoisans of several denominations with unusual interest in and commitment to human rights in Asia. We have a full-time volunteer coordinator, full-time staffer, and part-time field education seminarian. We meet once monthly for the full committee meeting and once monthly in two working groups: corporate action and education.

The working groups are involved in practicing what the staff is out preaching in the churches. That is, that once we learn of the human struggles of persons whose basic rights are being violated in Asia, we need to be involved in concrete ways to get at the causes of such strife. As the working groups come up with viable models, they suggest such actions to other groups and individuals or ask for particular kinds of help—often through the Advocate. The Committee's projects for this school year will be listed in the next Advocate.

If you would be willing to join our core group—or the groups in Madison and Detroit—or be among the charter members of new groups forming in Indianapolis and Champaign—let us know. We want to help you to find the level of commitment and time that best fits your present circumstance and your present place on the road to discipleship.

I re-print this message as a note of encouragement to the many people who have extended their circle of concern beyond the American borders, to embrace God's children everywhere.

(Excerpts from the message at a March 1978, Prayer Meeting in Seoul by distinguished elderly Korean Quaker leader, Ham, Suk-Hon.)

"I am convinced that we must all keep on struggling against evil but with the foundation for our struggle being our firm belief in Jesus Christ. He is our support in all these things.

It is essential to have the belief that God will give us the strength necessary. In fact, we know that He has already given us the victory. All we have to do is witness to this amazing fact. God will do the rest. This is what I am always telling the (Korean) C.I.A. when they question me.

God is giving us here and now these tests and trials to teach us what freedom and justice are. Therefore it is up to us to keep our eyes always on the goal.

We have this power because God has already given us the victory. Jesus said, 'If you keep my commandments, you will be my disciples'. In this way we will come to know the truth.

We are created differently with different opinions and faces but still we are all in the image of God and therefore all one in Christ. In this way then we can all participate together in a great symphony of praise to God."

The World Student Christian Federation (WSCF) sent 5 American university students to the Philippines and south Korea this past summer to study the human right situations in these countries.

The Student Christian Federations in the Philippines and south Korea have studied and worked in the human rights area and shown great concern and support for the problems of factory workers and slum dwellers.

Often these students have risked imprisonment and torture to come to the aid of workers asking for just employment practices and slum dwellers organizing for basic necessities.

The American students went to learn from their Asian counterparts in order to return to the States to tell the story to others and to work for change from this side.

One student is in California, two are in the Midwest and two are in the New York area.

Peace churches mount disarmament campaign

The 400,000 members of the nation's historic peace churches — Mennonites, Friends (Quakers) and Brethren — have been challenged to renew their peace witness with radical acts, including civil disobedience and tax resistance.

In a statement issued at the end of a four-day national conference of 300 delegates, members of the three denominations were urged "to seriously consider refusal to pay the military portion of their federal taxes as a response to Christ's call to radical discipleship."

The conference was the culmination of a two-year process called "The new call to peacemaking" in which Mennonites, Brethren and Quakers explored the meaning of their historic peace witness and sought new forms for that witness for today.

"Because our security is in Jesus Christ, we reject reliance on 'National Security,'" the delegates said in their common statement. "We reaffirm our membership in Christ's kingdom and in the global community by denouncing the pervasive idolatry of the nation and of military strength."

Among the proposals most likely to be vigorously debated within the Anabaptist tradition the three churches

represent is that of tax resistance.

Already being practiced by some members of the three groups, the new call conference asked agencies of the denominations "to consider the request of employees who ask, for reasons of moral conviction, that their taxes not be withheld."

The conference suggested that as an alternative to paying what it considered "military preparation" taxes — about 30 percent of all tax revenue — "Payments be channeled into a peace fund initiated by the new call to peacemaking."

During the four-day national conference, Ronald J. Sider, a member of the Brethren in Christ Church and professor of Theology at Eastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Philadelphia, re-examined the Biblical and Theological framework for the peace churches' witness.

"To announce Christ's Lordship to the principalities and powers is to tell governments that they are not sovereign," Sider said. "Merely to witness in a biblical way to the principalities and powers is to engage in dangerous, subversive political activity."

"Precisely as we plunge deeper into the centers of power in secular society," he added, "We will need ever

more urgently the strength of the church as a counter-culture of Christians whose visible commitment to the radical values of Jesus' New Kingdom is so uncompromising that the church's very existence represents a fundamental challenge to society."

The conference also decided to seek to carry its concern for disarmament to President Carter "to lay before the president our concerns about military spending, nuclear weapons, arms sales, and related matters."

Carter, they noted, has said that "nonviolence is at the heart of his concept of Christianity."

In committing themselves to "The goal of worldwide abolition of nuclear weapons," the new call delegates said the United States should reduce military spending by 10 percent a year on a scheduled basis, "transferring those funds to programs to meet human needs." Other nations should do the same, the statement said.

Sider, in closing the conference, challenged the delegates to consider even more radical action. "We must, regardless of the cost, confront our entire constituency with the nature of systemic injustice and the extent of our involvement in it," he said.

Black Lutherans support minority ministry at conference

DETROIT — Two hundred participants in the first Conference of Black Lutherans pledge their support to Lutheran Church in America goals and plans for minority ministry and voted to schedule a similar conference next October.

The three-day conference brought together black members, church members and representatives of LCA churchwide agencies. It was organized following a suggestion at a 1977 Conference of Black Pastors and Seminarians that called for a strengthening of the spiritual, academic and social interaction of those groups.

At the final session Sunday, Oct. 22 at Hope Lutheran Church here, Livingston Crichtlow of Elmont, N. Y., secretary of the task force that conducted the conference, said it had been agreed to plan the second conference Oct. 19-21, 1979, in Philadelphia, with a Development Committee of Black Lutherans to meet in Chicago Feb. 3 and begin making arrangements.

Crichtlow said the conference had resulted in many recommendations and suggestions for a "more inclusive Lutheran Church in America" that would be submitted, along with an evaluation of the meeting to supporting agencies. "And that concludes the work of this task force and this conference," he added. "We do not want to be a threat to the church but rather try to help the system operate."

He said the conference which brought representatives from both coasts and the Caribbean area and from most of the denomination's 33 synods had helped "spot people across the country who make up 'a skill bank,' and we intend to make names of those persons available to synods and all agencies of the church."

Thomas Clay, Jr., of Cleveland, a welfare worker, will be chairperson of the

development committee which was formed at a meeting of representatives from 13 synods.

The "Goals and Plans for Minority Ministry" were adopted by the ninth biennial convention of the LCA in Chicago last July. The comprehensive goal states that "during the period 1978-1984, the LCA shall continue to become more inclusive in membership while continuing and expanding its emphasis on justice in society."

Churchwide agencies were asked by the convention to implement the goals which called for more minority involvement in decision-making, integration of cultural variations in the church's life, growth in minority membership and involvement of congregations in social change programs.

The Rev. Giles A. Conwill of Washington, D. C., director of church vocations with the National Office of Black Catholics, served as keynote and his remarks frequently were referred to in workshops and other sessions.

Noting that the Lutheran Church in North America traced its roots to Europe, he stressed that blacks as people differ in many ways from Europeans, that there is a "richness in plurality" and that "time doesn't run for blacks, it walks."

The Rev. Dr. Robert J. Marshall of New York City, president of the 3.1 million member denomination that includes approximately 44,000 blacks, also recognized the slow movement of Lutherans to become an inclusive church.

The Rev. Ray Legania of Chicago had all clergy present gathered before the altar, then invited participants to fill the church's center aisle.

Historical issues cause suspicion of Asian colleges

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (UMC)—Because the church in Asia has historically avoided issues of social justice and equality, its institutions of higher education have become suspect, members of the United Methodist Board of Higher Education and Ministry were told here recently.

Eva I. Shipstone, Lucknow, India, coordinator of the Asian Women's Institute, told the 100-member board that the church in India, especially through its education institutions, is seen as a "vestige of colonialism; and expression of vested interest of the West..."

Rapid social changes in Asia have prompted a new awakening in human rights against old social and economic injustices, she said.

"In the past two decades it was becoming clearer to Christian colleges and universities of Asia that Christian higher education can fulfill its true mission only as it promotes in the young adult involvement, concern and participation, in the human struggles for justice, freedom and equality," she said.

Dr. Shipstone is a graduate of two Indian institutions: Lucknow University and Isabella Thoburn College. She earned her M.A. degree at Vanderbilt University and her Ph.D. from Harvard. The Asian Women's Institute represents research programs at nine women's Christian colleges in Pakistan, Japan, Korea, India, Iran and Lebanon.

The 19th century church in countries of Asia remained detached from the politico-socio-economic structures and unjust systems. By its loyalty to colonial governments and by its silence on human issues of justice, the Church wittingly or unwittingly fa-

vored the status quo. Through its education institutions, the Church was training its students to conform.

"Since the Church had come to Asian lands with colonial regimes and since the missionary and the ruler were often of the same color, spoke the same language and professed the same faith, in the eyes of the national church was to become the other face of the colonial coin."

As Christian colleges face new involvement and participation in social justice, she said they are faced with confused purposes, the challenge of providing education to more people while maintaining quality, increasing governmental control, a loss of a sense of community, student power politicizing the campus, and the challenge of Christian values.

"Values are the constants of life," she said. "All cultures have them. All religions believe in life, love, justice, truth, honor, beauty."

"Following World War II higher education was preoccupied with the importance of values. Many seminars and discussions were held on the integral place of Christian values in the curriculum and the classroom. But now a quarter of a century later, values as we understand them have receded from the campus. We now live in competitive and individualistic societies. Not only have societies become more secular, but also religions...With so much change and uncertainty; all around, the Christian college is challenged to provide a solid base to human existence to cope with change and to give direction."

She said the Asian Women's Institute is one way this value concern is being addressed.

Christian Church elects 1st black regional exec.

Indianapolis — Dr. John R. Compton, a Cincinnati pastor, will become the first black regional minister for the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the U. S., and Canada Feb. 1.

Dr. Compton, pastor of United Christian Church, will take the chief executive position for the Christian Church in Indiana and will be based in Indianapolis.

As Indiana's regional executive, Dr. Compton will have spiritual oversight of 219 congregations with approximately 70,000 members and administrative oversight of regional programs of evangelism, education, leadership development, ministry and stewardship.

Regional moderator, Mrs. Marilyn Moffett of Waynetown, in announcing his election by the board, praised Dr. Compton as "an able administrator, an effective preacher, a good listener" who has served congregations, regions and the denomination.

Dr. Compton has pastored the Ohio congregation for 25 of the past 30 years, serving from 1948-66 and from 1971 to the present. He also pastored Fulton Street Christian Church in Palestine, Texas, from 1944-48.

Dr. Compton served as associate regional minister for Ohio from 1966-69. He was assistant to the general minister and president of the denomination and administrative secretary of its National Convocation, a black fellowship body, from 1969-71.

Currently, he is on the Commission on Budget Evaluation, the allocating body of the church. He was second vice-moderator of the denomination from 1973-75.

Dr. Compton chaired the church's race and poverty program steering committee from 1970-77 and the committee on black church work from 1971-72, serving until 1976.

He was president of the National Christian Missionary Society, the predecessor of the National Convocation, in 1960 and was on the board of trustees of the United Christian Missionary Society from 1960-66.



Dr. Compton

Active in community organizations, Dr. Compton is president of the Cincinnati branch of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People.

He is past president of the Walnut Hills Area Council and the Victory Neighborhood Services Agency Board, 1976-78, and of the Community Commission, 1972-75.

He also serves on a number of community religious organizations, including the Interdenominational Ministerial Alliance of Greater Cincinnati, the Metropolitan Area Religious Coalition of Cincinnati and the Council of Christian Communities of Greater Cincinnati.

A graduate of Jarvis Christian College, Hawkins, Texas, Dr. Compton holds the bachelor of divinity degree and an honorary doctorate from Christian Theological Seminary, Indianapolis, where he has been an affiliate staff member. He and his wife, Lucille, have a grown daughter and son.

Israel aids Afro-Asian children

by Ellen Davidson
JERUSALEM — In Israel's 30 years of existence as a state, one of her overriding problems has been the disturbing social gap between immigrants and disadvantaged Afro-Asian Jewish communities and those from more technologically sophisticated Western cultures.

"The family unit, an all-important force in Israeli society, is proving to be a significant intervening factor in helping disadvantaged children catch up," says Professor Chaim Adler, Director of the Hebrew University's Research Institute for Innovation in Education.

Adler points to the Institute's pet project HIPPY, "Home Instruction Program for Pre-School Youngsters," in which many relatively uneducated mothers throughout the country are being trained to teach their four and five-year-old children at home.

This project, which has given a decided advantage to thousands of Israeli youngsters from poorer, Afro-Asian backgrounds, is currently being adopted by the Israeli Ministry of Education. Right now it is operating in 49 places through-

out Israel, involving some 5,600 families.

"It is the mother who is the effective and potential education and socialization factor," says Dr. Avima Lombard, founder of the HIPPY program and a leader in innovative education for the disadvantaged in Israel.

The idea of the program is to guide the mother in educating her pre-school child at home through a three-year series of carefully prepared, but uncomplicated exercises and games that introduce concepts of numbers and words. Mothers are visited once a week by para-professional HIPPY aides, who introduce the next week's work and collect exercise sheets from the previous week.

These aides, who handle about 15 families, are members of the community in which they work.

The premise of this innovative program is based on the theory that a child from a disadvantaged background arrives in first grade much as a stranger in a foreign land. His parents are not only poor, but in many cases, one of them is illiterate.