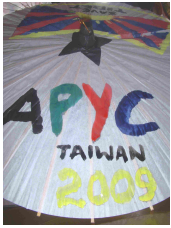




APYC 2009 REPORT



Amidst the heart-throbbing rhythm of Tai Drums performed by a group of Taiwanese primary school students, the 15th Asia Pacific Youth Conference, held from the 1st to 8th August, 2009, was launched in the harbour city of Kaohsiung, Taiwan. A total of 86 young and enthusiastic participants from 15 countries and a variety of cultural and faith backgrounds came together for this special event which had as its theme “Challenge, Choice, Change – Creating a Culture of Trust and Integrity.” It was an opportunity to experience inner transformation, develop a vision and goals for the future and learn and grow through personal and group exchanges.

Each day the conference program started with morning reflections based on topics like gratitude, honesty, love, purity, unselfishness, forgiveness and reconciliation and commitment. After the input, the participants spent time in small groups to share. The 2nd and 3rd day plenary sessions



on Challenge, Choice, and Change, explored the IofC core beliefs and the 4 steps of change that link personal and global change. The other two plenary sessions on “Creating A Culture of Trust and Integrity” featured stories about people making a positive difference through taking action at various levels. These included initiatives to monitor the integrity of performance of parliamentary members; to restore hope and trust in post-earthquake communities in Taiwan; the Sorry Day movement towards indigenous-non indigenous reconciliation in Australia; a proposal for a trust-building dialogue between a group of Thais and Cambodians following border conflict between their countries and an I CARE campaign from Korea inviting ordinary people to care for their environment in simple, practical ways.

In the afternoon, workshops on body movement, drama, family life, games mastery, music and sensitivity training drew out the best in each person's creativity and encouraged the expression of the inner journey they were experiencing. The evening programs featured colourful, cultural presentations from the nations represented at this conference followed by an Asia Pacific night market during which participants set up stalls to display and sell their cultural items or introduce their national IofC programs. In particular, the Challenge and Change evenings on the 2nd and 7th of August respectively offered conference participants an entertaining opportunity to face up to life's challenges and express changes they had experienced at the conference.



Another unique feature of the conference was the one-day Open Space meeting where participants raised issues of genuine concern and hosted discussions on topics for which they felt a particular passion and responsibility. Some of these involved honest conversation between neighbouring countries leading to the beginnings of a shared vision, while others provided a chance for teams to grow around topics of particular concerns such as the possibility for different generations to work together.

The final session was an amazing expression of the decisions and commitments the participants were taking away with them. It was also an outpouring of the pain and joy and the freedom of heart experienced as people felt released from their past burdens to take on the future. One Malaysian delegate made an open apology for the mistreatment of Indonesian labourers working in her country, an issue that has contributed to the current tension between both countries.

Right outside the room where we met, Typhoon Morakot, the most serious in 50 years, was in full force. Trees were uprooted and rooms had to be evacuated in the middle of the night due to floods. Thankfully however, we all survived and the spirit of the conference remained high. We left empowered by the sense of the unique contribution we could each offer and the importance, as Albert Chang, Chairperson of IofC Taiwan put it, of 'making the right choice' for the sake of tomorrow.



15th Asia Pacific Youth Conference

***Challenge, Choice and Change –
Creating a Culture of Trust and Integrity***

1-8 August, 2009. Kaohsiung, Taiwan

APYC Official Website: www.apyc.iofc.org