



CCA NEWS

ASIAN ECUMENICAL YOUTH ASSEMBLY (AEYA-2026) ■ CHIANG MAI, THAILAND ■

Fifth Asian Ecumenical Youth Assembly begins with celebrative worship



The Fifth Asian Ecumenical Youth Assembly (AEYA) opened with a celebrative worship service rooted in Asian traditions, unfolding as a vibrant expression of faith enriched through music and dance drawn from diverse Asian traditions, setting the tone for a week of engagement, reflection, and dialogue with the theme, “Break Every Yoke” (Isaiah 58:6).

The historic Asian youth summit began in the afternoon of 17 April 2026 at the Sirindhorn Learning Resource Center, Payap University in Chiang Mai, Thailand, with the participation of more than 200 youth from Christian Conference of Asia (CCA) member churches, national councils of churches, and ecumenical youth organisations from across Asia.

The overarching theme “Break Every Yoke” serves as a prophetic invitation to discern and respond to the diverse challenges confronting young people in contemporary Asia.

A traditional lamp-lighting ceremony led by Dr Anna Alisha Mathew Simon (Malaysia), May Thinzar Khine (Myanmar), Rosiana Indah Purnomo (Indonesia), Nandita Biswas (Bangladesh) and Kikang Nam (South Korea) was observed, symbolising the presence of light, hope, and unity.

The worship was led by youth from the Wunpawng Christian Church in Chiang Mai, and special prayers offered during the worship expressed deep solidarity with those suffering injustice, particularly the stateless, displaced, trafficked,

and marginalised, entrusting their struggles to God while seeking justice, healing, and liberation. Participants also gave thanks for the gift and potential of youth, and asked for guidance and strength to live out faith with courage and purpose.

Prayers were led by Abito de Jesus Salvador (Timor-Leste), Bunthoeun Sopanha (Cambodia), Chou Tz Ren (Hong Kong), Dissanayake Mudiyanse Sahan Kavishka Rambukwella Bandara Dissanayake (Sri Lanka), Elizabeth Sauimalae Salesa (New Zealand), Kasumi Hamana (Japan), Lazarus Jason Manish (India), Luisa Givero (Philippines), Methawint Mesathainjant (Thailand), Nguyễn Quốc Thanh Bình (Vietnam), Sione Malamala Liuanga He Lotu Hehepoto (Australia), Xaysombath Sisouphanthavong (Laos), Zheng, You-Qiang (Taiwan).

Echoing the assembly’s theme, the prayers became a collective cry for the breaking of all forms of “yokes”, both visible and unseen, affirming a shared hope for freedom, restoration, and renewal through God’s presence.



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AEYA 2026 Group Picture

CONTRIBUTIONS

We welcome your thoughts, reflections, and contributions. Please send them to: info@cca.org.hk



SOCIAL MEDIA

Join the conversation on social media! Follow Christian Conference of Asia on Facebook and Instagram, and use the official hashtag **#AEYA2026**

TODAY'S SESSIONS
(18 April)**09:30 AM – 10:30 AM**

Bible Study 1 (in Groups)

11:00 AM – 12:30 PMThematic Address II
Break Every Yoke: Asia
Navigating Amidst the
Evolving Geo-Political
and Geo-Economic
Challenges**02:30 PM – 04:00 PM**Break Every Yoke:
Impact of Migration of
Young Asians Beyond
Their Borders (Panel
Presentation)**04:30 PM – 06:00 PM**Youth in Dialogue (Group
Discussions)**SPEAKER
SPOTLIGHT****Dr Mathews George
Chunakara*****Thematic Address II
Break Every Yoke: Asia
Navigating Amidst the
Evolving Geo-Political
and Geo-Economic
Challenges***

Dr Mathews George Chunakara currently serves as the General Secretary of the Christian Conference of Asia (CCA), a position he has held since 2015. He also serves as the moderator of the World Council of Churches Commission of the Churches on International Affairs. A lay member of the Malankara Mar Thoma Syrian Church in India, he previously served as Asia Secretary of the WCC and Director of its Commission on International Affairs.

CCA General Secretary calls Asian youth to “break every yoke” and lead transformative change



Delivering the inaugural address at AEYA-2026, General Secretary of the Christian Conference of Asia, Dr Mathews George Chunakara, called on young people across Asia to “break every yoke” and become agents of transformative change in their societies.

Recalling the long history of CCA’s Asian ecumenical youth gatherings since 1964, Dr Chunakara highlighted AEYA as a continuing platform for young people to share experiences and engage with pressing regional and global challenges. He noted that today’s Asian youth are living at a critical juncture, facing interconnected issues such as economic inequality,

unemployment, limited access to education, mental health pressures, and the growing impact of digital and social media environments. Despite these realities, he emphasised that young people remain a vital force in society as innovators, bridge-builders, and agents of social and spiritual transformation.

The CCA General Secretary highlighted the role of ecumenical youth themselves, whom he described not merely as participants but as active shapers of the ecumenical movement. Dr Chunakara said, “From the early stages of the ecumenical movement, young people have played pioneering roles in fostering unity across denominations, nations, and cultures, helping to build spaces

of encounter and cooperation at local, national, regional, and global levels.”

He underscored that the future relevance of ecumenism depends on meaningful youth engagement, and urged the creation of stronger, more intentional platforms that enable young people to lead, contribute, and shape the direction of the movement. He called on participants to embrace the Assembly’s theme, “Break Every Yoke,” as a collective ecumenical and prophetic responsibility to challenge all forms of oppression and to work toward just, inclusive, and life-giving communities across Asia.



Christian youth urged to align with Missio Dei and confront global injustice

The first thematic address at AEYA 2026, “Break Every Yoke: Moving Towards the Fullness of God’s Purpose”, was delivered by Rev. Dr Hoyoung Ma, a prominent Korean theologian belonging to the Korean Methodist Church.

Rev. Dr Ma reflected on the paradox of the twenty-first century in which rapid scientific, technological and economic advancement coexisted with deepening global crises, including poverty, inequality, forced migration, human rights violations and environmental degradation. He noted that despite common assumptions that progress would lead to improved human well-being, the reality remained marked by widening injustice and ecological strain.

He raised a critical question for Christians regarding their mission in a world shaped by both global growth and global crisis. “In this present moment, where global growth



and global crisis exist together, what is the mission of Christians, especially Asian Christian youth, who have been sent to the ‘here and now’ rather than any other era? And what do we need to faithfully fulfill this calling?”

While acknowledging the efforts of governments, international agencies and civil society through development frameworks such as the Sustainable Development Goals and Official Development Assistance, Rev. Dr Ma challenged participants to consider the responsibility of people of faith in responding to suffering and in actively practising neighbourly love.

Framing the theme of AEYA 2026 “Break Every Yoke” within the concept of Missio Dei, he explained that the breaking of oppressive yokes was aligned with God’s purpose, stating, “Breaking the yokes of myself and my neighbor suffering from the global crisis is nothing less than aligning with God’s purpose, experiencing God’s fullness, and directing our lives toward God. This is exactly the Missio Dei that has sent us to our respective places of life in this era.” He emphasised that this calling was both spiritual and practical, requiring concrete engagement with real-world challenges.

Rev. Dr Ma affirmed that Christian discipleship could not be separated from love of neighbour, stressing that in a world marked simultaneously by global growth and global crisis, Christian youth were called to respond faithfully and actively to help break the many burdens and injustices affecting humanity.

Rosiana Indah Purnomo of the Communion of Churches in Indonesia (PGI) moderated the session.



OPENING WORSHIP





ABOUT AEYA 2026

The Asian Ecumenical Youth Assembly (AEYA) 2026 is the fifth Asian Ecumenical Youth Assembly organised by CCA, continuing a legacy of vibrant youth engagement in Asia. The journey began in 1964 with the First Asian Christian Youth Assembly (ACYA), held in Dumaguete City, the Philippines. The Second Assembly took place in New Delhi, India, in 1984 under the theme “Thy Will Be Done.” After a long interval, the Third Youth Assembly was held in Manado, Indonesia, in 2018 with the theme “Lord, Send Your Light and Truth to Lead Us.” The Fourth AEYA was held in 2023 in Kottayam, Kerala, India, embracing the theme “Asian Youth Affirming Renewal and Restoration of God’s Creation.”

Building on these rich experiences, AEYA-2026 continues the tradition of fostering ecumenical dialogue, spiritual renewal, and collective action for justice and unity among young Asian Christians. Over six decades, AEYA has nurtured ecumenical leadership, theological reflection, and transformational action in diverse contexts among young Christians across Asia.

Asia is home to over sixty percent of the world’s youth population, representing immense diversity, resilience, and

potential. While young people play vital roles in their families and societies, many face ongoing challenges, including unemployment, limited access to quality education, social inequality, and restricted participation in decision-making processes.

In response, youth across the region have increasingly raised their voices through movements calling for accountability, better governance, and social change. Their concerns are often amplified through digital platforms, reflecting both frustration with existing systems and a strong desire for a more just and inclusive future. At the same time, entrenched social norms continue to perpetuate gender inequality and marginalisation, limiting opportunities for meaningful civic engagement.

Today, Asia stands at a critical juncture shaped by interconnected social, economic, political, ecological, and spiritual challenges. Young people are navigating complex realities ranging from conflict and instability to environmental degradation and rapid technological change. Despite these pressures, Asian Christian youth continue to show resilience, creativity, and a deep sense of hope. They seek justice, human dignity, community, and purpose in life. Within this context, AEYA-2026 reflects on the

prophetic biblical call: “Break Every Yoke”.

AEYA 2026 Theme - “Break Every Yoke”

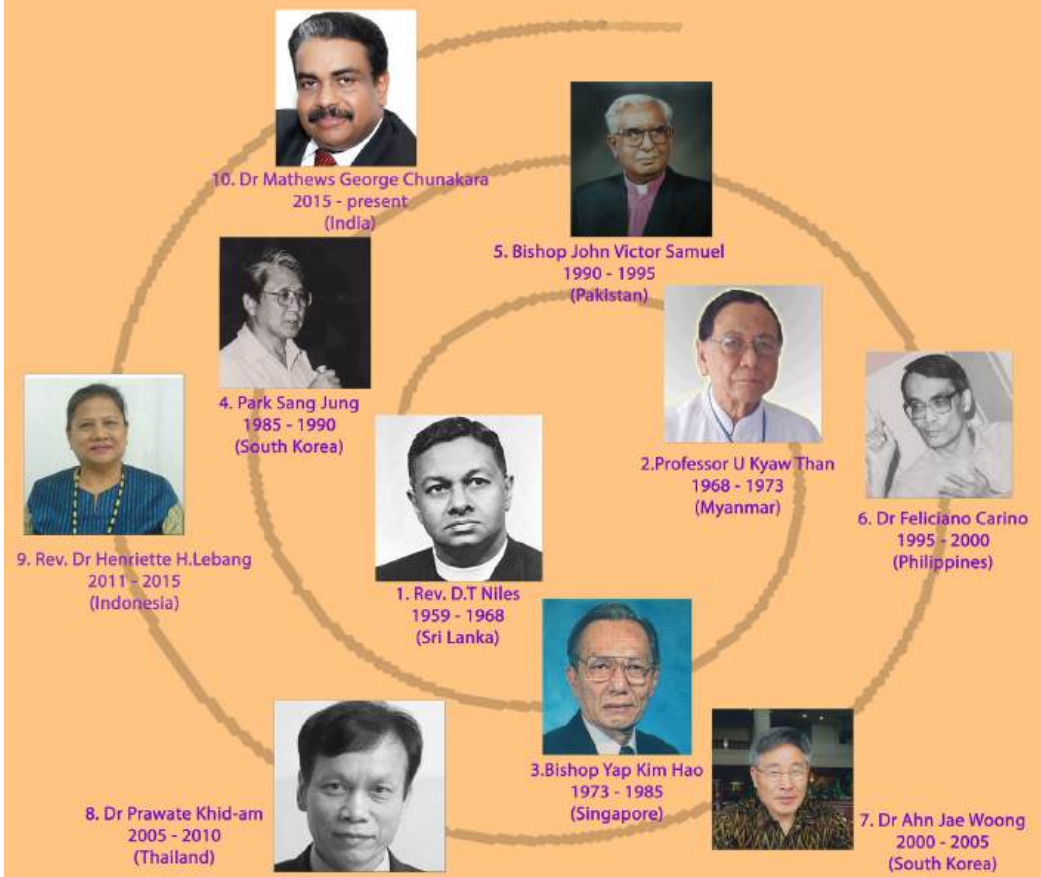
In biblical understanding, the yoke symbolises oppression, burden, exploitation, and systems that dehumanise. From the suffering of the Israelites in Egypt (Exodus 3:7-12) to the prophetic calls for justice (Amos 5:24; Micah 6:8), the Scriptures consistently reveal God’s deep concern for the marginalised. True worship is inseparable from justice. God rejects empty ritual and calls for a faith that liberates, restores, and transforms lives and communities.

For Asian Christian youth, the message of Isaiah 58 speaks powerfully into today’s realities. Across Asia, young people face structural injustice, poverty, discrimination, and environmental crises. The text reminds us that spirituality is never private; it is public and communal, calling Christians to stand in solidarity with the oppressed and to participate actively in God’s mission of liberation. Our faith urges us to embody the unity of Christ through shared mission, dialogue, and ecumenical cooperation (Galatians 3:28; 1 Corinthians 12:12-27), thus not merely cultivating personal piety but participating in God’s work of systemic renewal.

CCA IN HISTORY



Christian Conference of Asia
General Secretaries of CCA (1957 - present)



*Across Asia,
young people
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Breaking every yoke is therefore both a spiritual vocation and a social imperative. It calls upon Asian youth to recognise themselves as disciples of justice, empowered by the Holy Spirit to confront oppression, restore dignity, and bear witness to God’s kingdom here and now. True faith is active: it loosens the bonds of injustice, lifts the oppressed, and restores hope to communities longing for freedom.

PARTICIPANTS OF AEYA 2026

