

Anglican Liturgical Network of East Asia, ALNEA

In November 2018 ALNEA finally held its first “official” meeting at Tokyo. It understood its nature is not an organization, but as a fellowship composed of delegates from the Anglican Provinces in East Asia to the International Anglican Liturgical Consultation (IALC). While a majority of voices brought to IALC are from the West, some of the delegates from Asia, though a minority, would like to contribute their knowledge of liturgical matters from their own contexts, and to raise their concerns of liturgical inculturation which may not be widely heard or realized by Anglican churches outside Asia.

The idea of getting more Asian voices to IALC was first raised by Tomas Maddela from the Philippines, Ichihara Shintaro from Japan, and Joo Nak-Hyon Joseph from Korea in the IALC 2009. Two years later, in IALC 2011 convened at Canterbury, while cheering glasses of beer in a pub the idea of opening a chance for constant gatherings for discussing and sharing liturgical matters in Asian context was discussed. This year they added a newcomer, Lam Chun-wai from Hong Kong. All brought this idea back to the Liturgical Commission of our own respective Provinces, and with their support and recognition ALNEA began to take shape. We held meetings annually, first in Hong Kong in 2016, then Seoul in 2017, and Tokyo in 2018. We did not hold any annual meeting in 2019 because there was a full consultation of IALC held in Hong Kong, and we could not meet again face-to-face since 2020. Zooms did help a bit to arrive at a determination to compose a Eucharist Prayer for use in the East Asian context, hoping that this prayer may one day be included in our own prayer books.

With such determination and seeing no reason to deter us from meeting again, we decided to hold a gathering to work out the writing of a Eucharistic Prayer for East Asian Provinces. With the support of the Diocese of Taiwan we finally met at Taipei in February 2023 and began the composition process, first by borrowing a Eucharistic prayer structure, and then figuring out similarities and differences regarding the way of expressing our cultures. The final stage was the writing itself which was drafted in late October 2023 when we held a three-day meeting in Tokyo followed by consultations. The whole process was completed in late January.

A summary of the Eucharistic Prayer composed by ALNEA

Do we need a Eucharistic Prayer for Asian Christians? Our prayer books have already contained quite a number eucharistic prayers for use on Sundays and other occasions, and taking time to translate the English texts into our vernacular is more convenient. Seen from this perspective, we might say that it is not necessary. However, for Asians, there may be something ignored or

missing in the prayers we use Sunday after Sunday, which is the cultural expression of the local people concerned. It does not mean that we have to create a new prayer that looks very different from the current versions, which we think is unrealistic. Rather we would take the common eucharistic structure and fill in what we believe would express our Asian cultural concerns and expressions on certain theological or biblical themes that may have been taken for granted or ignored by Western churches.

We start with the creation of God. We acknowledge that the beauty of the earth is the gift to the people who are also part of nature. Among Asians, the creation, by whatever stories we tell, is always a manifestation of the good and harmonious will of the Creator God to embrace all things on earth and in heaven. Nature is for us to appreciate. We live in it and with it and not to get hold of it and control it, which would only turn the whole creation into economic exploitation and political manipulation.

Creation is about God, and it takes us to know the story of God. It is about the story of God meeting people like Abraham and Sarah with whom a friendship between the Creator and the created was built, and this happened in a meal setting which to Asians is the way of expressing one's love and care to others. It is exactly what Jesus did by eating with sinners and tax-collectors.

But things do not progress as God hopes and expects to see. Throughout human history we have been at war, and we cannot deny it. As in the West, there have been wars in Asia too and we as Chinese, Korean, Japanese, and Filipino know it too well. Our history with one another is full of hatred and distrust. This all tells us how rebellious are our human hearts that have turned the order of God's creation into chaos. We act like the prodigal son who chose to turn away from his father.

In the biblical story of the prodigal son, it is the father who waited for the son to return. Interestingly in the Asian context, it is always the mother who does the waiting, and this is the reason why we have this expression in the prayer: "But our merciful God, who is like a loving mother, always waits for the children to return and never abandons us."

Apart from the mother figure of God in the prayer regarding God's redemption, Asian people will never forget the silent power of sharing meals with people who may be our neighbors, friends, or even someone we do not like. Meals in Asian context always relate to hospitality and reconciliation. When meeting people on the street, particularly if they are our friends or neighbors, Chinese and Koreans will use this common and colloquial greeting, "Have you eaten yet?" to express our outreaching concerns. We see also this hospitality of Jesus toward those

who come to see him and seek healings from him. This leads us to the Institution Narrative as Jesus invited his disciples to often do it in remembrance of him.

After the Preface and toward the end of the Supplications we highlight the richness of God's creation by recognizing our colorful diversity in races, languages, cultures and ways of life which we believe are part of God's good will in the creation. In it there is no more hatred and hostility, wars and invasions, but only peace and reconciliation.

It is our first attempt to write a prayer from an East Asian cultural context and we hope it can serve as an effort to answer the call for liturgical inculturation. One thing we need to mention here is that this prayer first appears in English because it is impossible to avoid the use of English as a common language in our sharing and discussion process. Nevertheless, we have tried to create our own vernacular versions which are to be included in our new Prayer Books . They are now in the process of being developed.