

Workshop Theme:

From International Isolation to Witnessing for National Dignity and Human Rights

By Rev. Shu-Pin Chiu

I would like to share how my church, which is the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan (PCT) responds to situations of Taiwan.

In the first paragraph of the Confession of PCT, it states: "... Jesus Christ, the Savior of humankind, was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born a man of the Virgin Mary and became our brother. Through His suffering, crucifixion, death and resurrection He manifested God's love and justice, and through Him we are reconciled to God."

in the paragraph about Church, "We believe that the Church is the fellowship of God's people, called to proclaim the salvation of Jesus Christ and to be ambassador of reconciliation. It is both universal and rooted in this land, identifying with all its inhabitants, and through love and suffering becoming the sign of hope....", and on humankind's responsibility for creation, it affirms that " God has given human beings dignity, talents and a homeland, so that they may share in God's creation, and have responsibility with Him for taking care of the world." (approved in 31th Assembly in 1985)

Therefore, to identify with people who are suffering within Taiwan and without Taiwan has been an important guideline for PCT's ministries.

The number of indigenous people in Taiwan is about 580,000, which comprises 2.5% of the population, who divide into 16 ethnic groups (recognized). As for the issue of indigenous people in Taiwan, the history of foreign ruling has been actually a history full of blood and tears from the indigenous peoples, in the words, the lands of the aboriginal are annexed and the histories wiped out! Taiwanese aboriginals are the original residents in Taiwan, however, they have encountered great discrimination, stereotype, and exploitation. PCT has accompanied the aboriginal people in the journey of searching for justice, including in name, land, self-ruling and self-determination. And nowadays, the biggest problem behind all these unnecessary turbulence and upheaval for the Taiwanese aboriginal, which is also what PCT try to engage and tackle most, is how to stop the brutal violence of this invisible state machinery, guided by the one-China policy, unabashedly betrays the interests and well-being of Taiwan. Just like Rev. Omi Wilang, the secretary of indigenous ministry committee has once said, "We are the Austronesian people. And there is absolutely nothing could be related to China!"

On the thorny issue of the relationship with China, PCT affirms that the will of the Taiwanese people would be the basis for relations with China. According to an opinion poll done by Taiwan New Constitution Foundation, 90% of Taiwan inhabitants identify themselves as Taiwanese. Regarding recent military threat and isolation in international society by long term bullying from China, PCT supports that both sides of the Taiwanese Strait have a responsibility to find mutually acceptable means of interaction that are based on dignity and reciprocity. PCT urges to develop innovative strategies to ensure that the sovereignty and dignity of Taiwan are respected by the international community.

When Martial Law was in effect from 1949 to 1987, the church withstood much persecution from the government. Yet the PCT has never refrained from struggling for justice on behalf of the underprivileged such as laborers, young prostitutes, fishermen, the handicapped and political prisoners and their families. In addition to proclaiming the gospel, we believe that the Church has the responsibility to care for the poor and the weak, and challenge the social and political systems that caused injustice. As Taiwan becomes more democratic and free, PCT expands our Christian concern beyond Taiwan to the rest of the world. PCT provides relief for natural catastrophes domestically and internationally, and trains people to organize relief projects. During Covid-19, Taiwan has made contributions to international society by donating medical equipment, including masks, nasal cannula, thermal imaging camera, however, its participation in WHA was still rejected this year, even though “health is human right” is asserted. PCT will keep promoting Taiwan independence and strive for the day when Taiwan will be a formal member of the organizations such as the United Nations and the World Health Organization.

PCT give thanks to God for the continuing prayers and support of the PCT ecumenical partners. Please pray that the PCT will discern and remain faithful to God’s many challenges and live out its life and witness in humility, walking humbly with its God. Again, the Confession of Faith of the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan states that the PCT role in the world is “to make our Church the sign of hope through love and suffering.” PCT and all its members are called by God to work diligently and strive to become the genuine sign of hope in Taiwan by being faithful servants of our Lord, Jesus Christ.