

that require continual consolidating and reinforcing in order to guarantee the empowerment of women.

- The participation of women of faith—by encouraging dialogue and the practical exercise of reconciliation—reaffirms the church’s place as a space for the construction of peace, despite the current reality of division.
- The cooperation of women of different faith backgrounds clearly exemplifies the reconciling power that can generate profound transformation in a society wounded by war.
- The diverse capacities for, and forms of, encounter and celebration proper to women support the restoration of the dignity of victims of the armed conflict, the inclusion of ex-combatants, and the strengthening of spaces for articulating and consolidating trust in our communities.
- Women of faith provide spiritual support for promoting values that create the conditions for peace and reconciliation; they have the capacity to offer safe spaces in which differences are respected and nonviolent responses to conflict are fostered.

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Translated from Spanish by Rene Baergen, Pastor of Hispanic Ministries, First Mennonite Church, Kitchener, Ontario.

Interreligious Peacebuilding in Indonesia

In 2010, Duta Wacana Christian University, an interdenominational institution in Yogyakarta, owned by twelve Indonesian synods (two of which are Mennonite), was asked by the United Board to carry out a project entitled Interreligious Understanding and Peacebuilding. The United Board is an international agency for the empowerment of Christian higher education in Asia.

We designed this project for lecturers from Indonesia's Christian higher education institutions with the intention that they would develop interreligious peacebuilding programs on their own campuses. In a nation with the largest number of Muslims in the world, interreligious peacebuilding is of great importance, because social conflicts in Indonesia are always the combination of very complex factors. They are often rooted in the violence of the past, provoked by misguided hermeneutic understandings of religious texts, and sustained by unjust social structures, not to mention the misuse of media networks that go beyond national boundaries. The cultural complexities and people's different mentalities are often used as a tool to further exacerbate conflicts and violence; the noble values of local cultures are often twisted in the wrong direction. Efforts to empower people to transform social conflicts into peaceful relationships are thus crucial, and include initiatives to educate and empower younger generations to engage in interreligious peacebuilding.

Higher education in Indonesia can play a very strategic role in such efforts. It can empower community through the development of critical discourses and the transformation of an intercultural paradigm. It can also provide space and resources for scholars to gain critical insights and deep intercultural experiences, as well as to give birth to reliable networks of college-based peacemakers. We believe Indonesian Christian colleges can serve as active ministers of reconciliation because not only is the number of students seeking higher education growing rapidly, as Indonesia becomes a middle-class economy, but youth are pulled by both radical extremists and groups seeking tolerance and peacebuilding.

The project focused on two main areas. First, it aimed to empower Christian higher education institutions so that they could integrate interreligious peacebuilding in all parts of academic life, including teaching, research, and community service. This was achieved by developing participants' skills through a series of five annual workshops where they learned and explored various ideas on how interreligious peacebuilding could be supported in higher education institutions. Participants were young educators from 17 Christian higher education institutions (11 universities and 6 seminaries) who were officially representing their institutions. They were asked to make a five-year commitment to attend, and to be actively

involved in annual workshops which started in 2011. They also had to be less than 40 years old when they attended the first workshop.

Before coming to each workshop, participants were asked to write their ideas according to their respective cluster (teaching, research, or community service). These ideas were then presented in the workshop for discussion and enrichment. Workshops also included field visits to holy sites and educational institutions representing Indonesia's other faiths (Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Confucianism, as well as Indigenous beliefs).

Secondly, the project aimed to establish two types of higher education networks for interreligious peacebuilding: one for Christian educators, and one reaching beyond our campuses to embrace fellow peacebuilders in other religiously oriented institutions, including the state Islamic university system.

We hoped that through this process the participants would gain knowledge and skills in interreligious peacebuilding that they will develop further on their respective campuses. In June 2017, the end of the five-year program was marked by the publication of a book documenting the activity. There was also an official launch of the Indonesia Peace Network (www.indonesiapeacenet.org), a network of Christian higher education institutions and interested individual lecturers in these institutions to work together for the enhancement of interreligious peacebuilding, during the annual national congress of the Association of Christian Higher Education Institutions in Indonesia. In that congress, member universities of the Association officially integrated the Indonesia Peace Network into their portfolio.

Equally important is what is happening on the campuses of the participants. Some of the Christian universities and seminaries are now developing their own programs through establishing peace study centers and organizing interreligious peacebuilding activities integrated into mandatory community service programs. Some are offering courses, creating teaching content for integration into existing courses, and doing research on such topics as the role of architecture and the use of local wisdom in interreligious peacebuilding, and launching student peace clubs, to mention just a few.

Much has been accomplished over five years, but many challenges remain. The biggest challenge overall is to get real support from both the

leadership and the academic culture of the Christian universities. Almost all these institutions support the idea of interreligious peacebuilding cognitively and passionately, but not all are ready to implement the idea concretely on their respective campuses, because of obstacles such as gaps in financial or administrative capacity. As a minority, Christians, including Mennonites, have to bear witness to interreligious peacebuilding persistently and consistently with full commitment. As when the Israelites journeyed through the desert to the promised land, some are further along, some are behind. That is the hard fact of any new idea. The most important thing in any kind of journey is to keep moving forward.

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