

YTCS Initiates “Ecumenical and Academic Exchange Program”

The Christian communities in Asia, especially among the indigeneous communities, are growing very fast, but we are ignorant of each other. Many creative theological activities are also taking place in Asia but there is no ecumenical platform mutual sharing. Affirming that the present and future health of the churches and ecumenical movement lies on the strength of ministerial formation and theological education, the Yushan Theological College & Seminary (YTCS) with the support of FTESEA and ATU initiated “Ecumenical and Academic Exchange Program” (EAEP) among theological insitutions of ATU members schools to promote contextual research and theologies, mission practice, new theological thinking and debate, and to foster ecumenical consciousness among the students and scholars. UTCS is having this mutual exchange program with the Sabah Theological Seminary, Malaysia (Th.M& Faculty), the Myanmar Institute of Theology (Th.M& Faculty), Yangon, the Lutheran Theological Seminary, Hong Kong (Th.M& Faculty) and the Union Theological Seminary, Philippines (D.Min, Th.M and Faculty). YTCS is delighted to share our expertize on Indigenous Biblical Hermeneutics, Contextual Theologies and Culture, Indigenous Theology and Music. The length of exchange program is one months to six weeks depending on the academic calendar of respective institutions. The credit earned by the students are counted in their respective institutions. The student are placed under a competent mentor/scholar and the host institution arranges real world exposure programs in diverse contexts to provide opportunity to experience different Asia realities and church traditions. Ms. Panay Asing, one of the students from Yushan at MIT, shared her experience like this: “Taiwanese people love to go for mission trip and many think that they gain enough knowledge of those people during their short stay with them. Since Taiwan enjoys a better economic position, they engaged mostly in evangelistic and charitable work. When I told my friends that I am going to Myanmar for exchange program, some of my friends were surprised and asked, `Why do you go to Myanmar?` `Why don't you choose a western country or US?` These questions indirectly imply that Asian countries are not the place for the Taiwanese people to learn theology just because they are in a better economic position than Myanmar. This is colonial mind-set and theological education also operates within this perception. I had an opportunity of studying in the Philippines and US earlier, and I came to realize that one must do theology in Asian context with Asian resources. After living more than a month at MIT, I could understand better the complex realities of ethnic issues, economic deprivation, religious issues, rich cultural traditions and how the ethnic minorities respond to the dominant forces. I could understand theology of struggle, inter-faith dialogue and indigenous theology deeper and I have learnt many things that I can take home and relate to indigenous context in Taiwan. I would say that my theological perspective is totally changed through living, interaction with fellow students and professors. I am very thankful for this very enriching exchange program and I hope many students will be benefited theologically and spiritually in their theological journey.” This testimony speaks volumes of the importance of ecumenical and academic exchange program.

We hope that other seminaries/colleges from China, South Asia and North East Asian countries will also be part of this exchange program. We are thankful to FTESEA and ATESEA for encouragement and support.

Reported by Wati Longchar