

Overseas guests welcomed to Assembly

Overseas guests were welcomed to Assembly today and they responded by expressing how “privileged and thankful” they were to be present.

The Rev Chan Bae Byun, the ecumenical relations director for the Presbyterian Church in Korea, told Assembly he brought greetings from his country to a Church with the spirit of Waitangi.

The associate general secretary of the Uniting Church of Australia, the Rev Glenda Blakefield, spoke of the similar challenges faced by the Presbyterian and Uniting churches.

The Rev Maleta Tenten, the Presbyterian Church Kiribati Secretary for Mission, made a plea to the Moderator and the Church to remember I-Kiritibati people. She spoke about how climate change is affecting Kiribati and thanked the Church for passing a policy to call on the New Zealand government to establish relocation strategies for islands under threat of sinking because of climate change.

“I feel I have been honoured here. Thank you for everything,” she said.

The Uniting Congregational Church of Japan ecumenical secretary, the Rev Makoto Kato, told Assembly that it was his first visit to New Zealand and “I never expected to see so many Japanese cars running here”.

He spoke about money donated by Presbyterian churches after the Japanese earthquake, which he said helped set up three disaster relief centres still in operation today.

The Pacific Conference of Churches general secretary, Rev Francois Pihaate, told Assembly “Individually we are a drop, together we are an ocean”.

Some of the overseas guests also presented the Moderator, the Right Rev Ray Coster, with gifts before Assembly farewelled them with a standing ovation.

A total of 16 guests came from overseas for Assembly this year including the moderator of the Presbyterian Church in Korea, the Rev Dr Dal Ik Son and his wife; the visiting minister from the Presbyterian Church in Chile, the Rev Joao Petrecelli; the Presbyterian Church Myanmar general secretary, the Rev Ring Lian Thang; the Presbyterian Church Myanmar theology lecturer Ms Lalmingsangi; the Presbyterian Church Myanmar mission secretary the Rev Cin Za Lien; a representative from the Presbyterian Church in Vanuatu, Johnny Albert Tomatelu; from the Protestant Church Tahiti – Pastor Arthur Fua and Deacon Pierre Vahine; the local rep for the Cook Island Congregational Church, the Rev Nio Jim Mariete and the Rev Petesa Sionetuato from Ekalesia Niue Church.

Global Mission Coordinator, the Rev Phil King, thanked Local Arrangements for organising tours for the guests who got to see the tourists spots of Rotorua.

One of the highlights from the overseas visits at Assembly was the signing of a mutual ministry agreement between the Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand and the Presbyterian Church of Korea, which was signed during the Moderator's dinner on Friday.

As a result of the agreement, ministers from the PCK will be able to be work in Presbyterian churches in New Zealand without leaving their membership to the PCK.

The Asian Ministries Coordinator for the Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand, the Rev Han Kyoung Gyun, described the agreement as "awesome" and said it was significant. He confirmed that it replaces an earlier agreement signed between the two Churches in 1982.

He also confirmed that the agreement will ensure a sharing of resources and is the result of a lot of prayer from many Korean ministers and congregations.