



# *Dialogue*

Creating the Next 60 Years

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## Project Report

May 21st and 23rd, 2011

Academic Program “Focus 4: Dialogue between cultures and religions”

International Conference for Reflection and  
Curriculum Development in Interreligious Understanding and  
Peacebuilding in Asia



60th Anniversary Project  
INTERNATIONAL CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITY



ICU 60th Anniversary Projects

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## **ICU, UB Hold International Conference for Reflection and Curriculum Development in Interreligious Understanding and Peacebuilding in Asia**

The United Board for Christian Higher Education in Asia United Board sponsored a conference that took place between the 21st and 23rd of May, 2011 at the International Christian University (ICU) in Tokyo, Japan. The theme was “Interreligious Understanding and Peacebuilding in Asia”, and participants from 6 different Asian countries took part, with representatives of the United Board and ICU acting as moderators.

The goals of the conference were two-fold: to create an active network of Asian higher education institutions dedicated to inter-religious peace studies, and to create a concrete plan on how to build a curriculum that would suit the needs of the various communities and cultures taking part.

The conference began with presentations from all attendees, detailing the work they are doing under the United Board banner to improve communication and reduce conflict between the people in their communities. It culminated in a day of discussion and analysis of methodology, curriculum content, and potentially rich avenues of research. This paper summarizes not just the work going on in these various countries, but also the major themes that were under discussion, and the final decisions made in furtherance of the conference’s goals.

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There are four sections, each dedicated to a different aspect of the conference. Section I summarizes the keynote speech by the Rev. Dr. William E. Leshar, ICU board member and former chair of the Parliament of World Religions. Section II gives a very brief summary of each presenter's work. Section III covers a few of the major themes that arose during discussion on curriculum and methodology. Finally, Section IV summarizes the conclusion of the conference, and the decisions made on the part of the attendees about where the research should go next.



## Section I – Keynote Speech by Rev. Dr. William E. Leshner

“Outside of a liturgical setting, the word religion is not naturally related to the word peace. Rather it, all too often, conjures up images of conflict, violence, and bloodshed.”

Rev. Dr. William E. Leshner, ICU, May 23, 2011

The Reverend Dr. William E. Leshner has held a number of prestigious positions in the interfaith community. He has served as the chair of the Parliament of the World’s Religions, and now sits on the board at JICUF (Japan ICU Foundation). Leshner’s keynote speech, titled, “The Religions: Their Susceptibilities and Promise,” began with a joke, but ended with a solid philosophical statement on why he believes, no matter how difficult things may seem at times, that there is hope for peace in the world.



Leshner laid out what he thinks are the three main reasons behind the tendency to violence among religious communities, but he then gave examples of why he believes that the causes of violence can also be sources for peace between religions. His first main point was that the exclusivism of religion can make religious people more susceptible to violence. He stated that, “Exclusivism teaches that one’s religion is the only truth. Some say that all religions are by nature exclusive and that is the basic problem with religion in general. There’s some truth to that. People embrace a faith tradition because they believe it is the truth about life.”

His implication was that the drive behind exclusivists refusing to recognize any religion but their own as “the only truth”, leads to much conflict. However, he also said that, “... more and more a sense is developing that what is truth for me does not need to negate what is truth for you.”

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And this gives him hope. He noted that a number of scholars around the world are “pointing to a fundamental convergence at the core of the teachings of the major world religions.” In other words, people are starting to understand that while the differences between religions seem almost insurmountable, as Karen Armstrong said, “the core of every religion is compassion.”

Leshner also stated that contextual religious studies are helping reduce the tension between faiths. People are more likely now to look at a piece of holy text and, rather than take it literally, apply it to their lives in a way that mirrors the spirit of the words, rather than the actual words. As Leshner said, “The holy words become incarnate...an ancient text becomes a living one.”

Finally, leading figures in the inter-religious movement are “changing the way we talk about religion”. Leshner relayed a quote by Catholic priest, author, and proponent of better inter-religious communication, Raimon Panikkar, to prove his point. Panikkar said that, “I left Europe (for India) as a Christian, I discovered I was a Hindu and returned as a Buddhist without ever having ceased to be a Christian.” According to Panikkar, the idea that one truth belongs to one religion only was an alien one, and Leshner agreed.

The next susceptibility that Leshner discussed was due to the very modern issue of globalization. Leshner believes that globalization has led to a loss of identity for many people, as people become more connected by the clothes they wear, the food they eat, and the websites they visit. More people are sharing the same culture, and many young people feel that loss perhaps more strongly than others. They cling, “onto their inherited religion with the fervor of a new convert.” This, of course, can lead to issues when that fervor leads to fundamentalism, and then moves further into extremism.

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In response to this susceptibility, the loss of identity, is the creation of new identities as people are exposed to the cultures and customs of other people they otherwise would never meet. Leshar said that he himself has felt an evolution in the way he defines his religion. He used to define himself as Lutheran. Then with experience and discovery of other traditions, he came to think of himself as a Christian first, then as a Lutheran. Now, he thinks of himself as, “an Inter-religious Christian in the Lutheran tradition.”

He is now aware, he said, that as a person of faith, he belongs, “to a vast company of fellow human beings...I can acknowledge their experiences and respect their beliefs without fully understand them or agreeing with them.” This mindset is the key to creating new identities.

His final reason for religion’s susceptibility to violence is, as he puts it, “the banishment of religion from the public sphere”. Although he says that since 9/11 religion has been forced back into that realm, even as recently as 12 years ago, there was no religious research going on at the United States Institute for Peace studies. How is it possible, he asked the audience, to understand the situation in a country like Nigeria without, “understanding the tensions between the Christians in the South and the Muslims in the North and the traces of tribalism and animism that still mark both traditions”?

However, religion has begun to come back as a valuable part of peace studies, and according to Leshar, the conference and its participants are parts of that movement.

“Religions are no longer being side-lined in the search for peace,” he said. “But how can they best play their role? This conference is doing its part.”

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He laid out exactly why the ICU conference was helping. He believes that in the interfaith courses the conference members are creating, they:

- can broaden the idea of religion for students and give them a cultural and historical context in which to understand the particularity of the revelation of the divine in the religions of the world.
- can mold new identities for the students so that they are not the victims of an eroding identity in a world of globalization, but see themselves as a part of the host of inter-religious witnesses.
- can prepare their students for leadership in the world.

Finally, Leshner seemed to want to inspire the participants into pushing themselves to create a curriculum that will help the students grow not as just faithful worshipers, but as interfaith communicators. He said,

“You can help them to see their own religion together with the other religions of the world, and especially in their part of the world, as instruments of peace, justice, and positive social change.”



## Section II – Day 1 Presentations Summary: Local Projects in Inter-religious Understanding Throughout Asia.

In order to give fair coverage to all presenters, this section of the paper has been arranged in blocks dedicated to each region taking part in the conference. For brevity, and to focus attention on the results of the conference itself, the salient points have been included, but much valuable information has been unfortunately left out.

### India

#### 1) Valliammal William Baskaran, Lady Doak College Centre for Inter-faith Relations, Tamil Nadu



Baskaran's presentation on the curriculum development taking place at Lady Doak College focused primarily on objectives and methodology. The main objectives were:

- To train the faculty on framing the curriculum for peace building
- To train the faculty on the methods and approaches of teaching peace studies
- To build a network with higher education institutions to collaborate in their initiatives for peace and communal harmony.

A two-day workshop on curriculum design for peace education was held in March 2011, with 29 participants from various colleges. The idea was to create a framework for curriculum building across different faculties, and one of the conclusions was the formation of a network between institutions for effective implementation and sharing of resources.



## 2) Tony Sam George, Christ University, Bangalore

George showed how getting practical data on how peace studies curriculum from undergraduate students would be beneficial for the curriculum as a whole.

George said, “One challenge is that students in the peace studies have their own problems with family conflict. Indian students have little understanding of inter-religious understanding and dialogue, even though the country as a whole is very multi-cultural.”



He also made it known that he believes student feedback to be an essential part of the curriculum building process.

## 3) Patrick Gnanapragasam, University of Chennai, Madras

Gnanapragasam discussed the idea of “crosscutting socio-cultural networks” in relation to peace-building and inter-religious communication and understanding.



Cross-cutting essentially refers to the idea that fundamentally different people, networks, and institutions will need fundamentally different communication tools. He focused on the idea of social trust, as the “most vital component of social capital,” essentially the values, attitudes, networks and structures that “create social trust and reciprocity between individual actors and across social groups”.

He discussed the necessity of creating curricula that support the development of cross-cutting social networks that would be more resistant to social and religious conflicts, but that could also serve as inter-religious sources of harmony.

## 4) T. Thomas Philip, Union Christian College, Aluva, Kerala

Philip told the audience much about the past, present, and future work of Union Christian College, highlighting the intrinsic inter-religious nature of a curriculum going back 90 years.



The doors of Union Christian College, even in 1921, were open to anyone. He referred to a number of different programs taking place right now, but particularly relevant has been the work of the Regional Folklore Centre. The Malayalam department leads the program, which sends post grad students and their teachers on week-long research trip to various tribal settlements across Kerala and beyond. The students study the culture and ethnic knowledge of the region there are in, and document it. The participants even fund the data-collecting themselves, “as an ongoing endeavor”, and write up their findings in research papers.

## China and Japan

### 1) Liu Jiafeng, Central China Normal University, Wuhan, Hubei

Liu’s goal is to make the course on inter-religious understanding a core one for undergraduate students at CCNU, many of whom will go on to become teachers themselves. He hopes that they will eventually disseminate the ideas they learn in Liu’s classroom, and propagate the desire for peace. However, he has had some difficulties that may be particular to Chinese society.



He stated that in China, “rich and educated people (think they) don’t need religion, only the poor and dumb need it.” He believes that much of the animosity towards religion stems from that famous quote, “Religion is the opiate of the masses.” He wants to “wash the students’ brains of the phrase”, by bringing in leaders of different faiths to help students get better understanding of those religions, and to correct misconceptions.

## **2) Shin Chiba, ICU Department of Politics and International Relations, Tokyo**



Chiba’s presentation differed slightly from the others in that it focused on a program dealing with peacebuilding but not specifically religious peacebuilding. He discussed the work of ICU’s 21st Century COE Program that ran between 2003 and 2008.

The theme of the program was “peace, security, and conviviality”, and Chiba gave an overview of five English language books that came out of the program related to the United Board initiative to foster inter-religious understanding and peace-building in Asia.

## **Indonesia**

### **1) Theofransus Litaay, Satya Wacana Christian University, Central Java**



As did all Indonesian presenters, Litaay mentioned that religious pluralism is a fact of life in Indonesia, not something that has to be thought about academically.

As did many of the Indian researchers, Litaay discussed how to train faculty on building peace studies curricula, and how to provide the students with not just an academic, but also an enriching, educational experience that will aid in the promotion of peace. Not only are they looking at religion, but they are also trying to create new courses linking peace and gender, peace and language, and “Communication as a tool of improving intercultural understanding”

## **2) Jeanny Dhewayani, Duta Wacana Christian University, Yogyakarta**



Dhewayani went into great detail about the program in place at Duta Wacana. The first year of the program was designed to create local networks for the purpose of inter-religious peace-building in different Christian institutions in Indonesia. In the 2nd and 3rd years, the scope of research and discussion will be widened. In the 4th year, the inter-religious peace-building curriculum will be implemented using what was learned in the previous workshops and conferences, and the 5th year will see publication of the findings of the workshops, along with recommendations and assessment of Asian inter-religious understanding and peace-building curriculum

## **3) Siti Syamsiyatun and Bernard Adeney-Risakotta, Universitas Gadjah Mada, Indonesian Consortium for Religious Studies (ICRS-Yogya), Yogyakarta**



This team presentation accentuated the difficulties facing Indonesia, and they noted that incidences of Muslim and Christian conflict seem likely to increase in number over the next 50 years. One reason for the increase is that religious education is very exclusive, “Muslims teach their own, Christians teach their own, Buddhists teach their own.”

In response to that, ICRS has created an inter-religious consortium, a place where everyone can get together and talk, but not “a place based upon all religions.” Adenay-Risakotta was particularly emphatic in stating that, “We are not in an interreligious dialogue. We talk every day about lots of things.”

They ended their presentation by noting that, while Indonesia is facing difficulties, they are also a source of hope for the inter-religious understanding and peace-building movement. Contrary to what the news says, the vast majority of people of different religions interact normally and “live in peace every day.”

#### **4) Yustina Trihoni Nalesti Dewi, Soegijapranata Catholic University, Semarang**

Dewi discussed how her university has to deal with the issue of inter-religious communication every day. While Soegijapranata is a Catholic university, only 40% of the students are actually Catholic. Another 40% are Muslim and the remaining 20% is made up of people of various faiths. In their program, they teach religiosity, rather than religion.



Essentially, Dewi said, they try to teach people to have a tolerant attitude, towards cooperation between religions, by helping people become better able to communicate about their own faith. The goal of the program is to learn how religiosity will help students become more religious and more tolerant, and eventually, nurture students so they are able to understand the essence of human dignity.

## Thailand & the Philippines

**1) Suchart Setthamalinee, Payap University  
Institute for Religion, Culture, and Peace (IRCP),  
Chiang Mai, Thailand**



IRCP has hosted 5 “Francis Seely Inter-religious dialogues”, since 2005, and participants have come from various religious backgrounds. The dialogues covered various real-life topics related to religious beliefs. One topic involved the question, “Can humans make the world a better place?”, while another investigated methods of dialogue between people who share the same religion, but not the same philosophy regarding that religion.

Their Inter-religious dialogues led to a number of important conclusions, but most importantly it brought “improved exchange and cooperation between faculty of different institutions teaching peace studies,” and aided in the “implementation of courses and programs in peace and reconciliation.”

**2) Eduardo Domingo, De La Salle University,  
Manila, Philippines**



The undergraduate program on inter-religious dialogue at De La Salle was the focus of Domingo’s talk. He stressed that education can be used as a tool to guide people towards respect, dialogue and compassion. The program was modified as they designed it, and it was implemented in April 2011 in a seminar with participants of different faiths, under the theme “Respecting Diversities, We Promote Unity.”

He made mention of the idea that biases and prejudices are learned, and very difficult to overcome. In order to counter those biases, people need not just knowledge, but also empathy. “The dialogue is not just about achieving goals, but about understanding the other person,” he said. Domingo also noted that he often thought about how to take his program outside the university setting to help propagate dialogue.

### 3) Loreta Castro, Miriam College, Manila, Philippines

Castro stated that she believes one of the most important steps in promoting a culture of peace is to begin with the training of teachers.



She stated that the Philippines do have quite a lot of prejudice and discrimination, particularly against Muslims by Christians. These prejudices have a root in the fact that people have learned them for generations, receiving negative messages about the other group, the cycle “perpetuated by fear of and ignorance about the other”. Training teachers how to break the cycle could lead to a reduction in tension and promotion of peaceful communications.

### 4) Marc Garcia, Silliman University, Dumaguete City, Philippines

Garcia told of his desire to provide a forum for discussion among students of at least three different religious backgrounds, but by using the “bottom-up approach,” and involving students heavily in the process. Students are made into the experts in his program, which focuses on non-conventional methods of engagement. He is attempting to develop a collective understanding of religion by drawing “commonalities and differences”



from the various religions, and trying to identify where potential areas of conflict will appear.

**5) Marites Calica Yee, Institute of Women's Studies,  
St. Scholastica's College, Manila, Philippines**



Yee showed the audience how her institution tries to improve interfaith dialogue, under the theme “Moving Beyond Faith.” They look not just at religion, but at how religion deals with gender balance and other world issues, like ecological protection.

St. Scholastica's College held an interfaith workshop on ecological justice. Her philosophy seemed to be that you shouldn't talk about religion, you should talk about how your religion affects daily life. Yee asked a number of questions, one being, “What religious tenets in the four major religions can help us decide how to value life and distinguish between right and wrong environmental practices and attitudes?”

Dr. Avron Boretz of the United Board took the floor after the final presentation was finished, and posed a question to the audience meant to stimulate discussion, and to find some sort of general consensus on where the free discussion on the next day should lead.



## Section III – Service Learning at Petra Christian U.

On the second official day of the conference, Hanny Hosiana Tumbelaka gave a presentation on the Community Outreach Program (COP) at Petra Christian University (PCU) in Surabaya, Indonesia.



In his introduction for Tumbelaka's lecture, Kano Yamamoto, deputy chair of ICU's board of trustees, stated that Indonesia is an ideal country to use as a model in a discussion about interreligious understanding. Indonesia has a long history of multi-religious and multi-cultural intercommunication, and their experience could help other countries looking to find ways to improve understanding.

The COP conducts its program under the umbrella of service learning, an experiential education philosophy that encourages the combination of learning and community service, allowing for richer interactions and dialogue within communities, at the same time as giving students deeper more meaningful educational opportunities. Participants from around the world visit villages in the Kediri area of Indonesia, and live there for 4 weeks in July and August every year. They work with, live with, and interact daily with the villagers, and through the program the students are expected to fulfill three key requirements:

- 1) They must take part in preparatory classes before going to the villages. The classes are designed to help the students adapt more quickly when they arrive in their temporary homes.
- 2) The service the students provide must be sustainable and necessary. The students are required to conduct surveys of the area to determine what is actually needed before the service project begins.
- 3) Students are required to write a journal that records their own personal reflections throughout the entire project, and afterwards, to enrich the learning process.

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The program is divided into three periods, pre-program, implementation, and end-program.

The pre-program period has staff visit potential villages in order to discuss the project with local leaders, and determine how welcome the program will be. According to Tumbelaka, it often takes a lot of work to convince local communities that the COP are not there to conduct mission work for a Christian church. Since the area is predominately Muslim, there is often a bit of hesitation.

The PCU students are expected to act as guides and interpreters for the overseas students once they arrive, and so a series of 11 courses are run during the pre-program period to help them prepare for that role. They are also offered the chance to visit the villages before the project starts to introduce themselves to the community, and to get data that will help finalize any project plans.

The implementation period is next, when the students begin their projects, and their four week stay. The first few days are spent getting used to the area and its people, and then work continues until a few days before the end of their stay.

Through the reflection journals, PCU has learned that students' first impression of the villagers is that they are lazy. The way the locals do everything is different, and perhaps being used to living in fast cities in cultures with rigidly defined systems leads the students into making harsh judgments too quickly. After a few days though, Tumbelaka said, the students start to understand the rhythm of the area. They begin to understand the reasons behind the differences, and eventually their views about the locals become positive ones.

Conflicts do occur, according to Tumbelaya. Living conditions, for both the Indonesian and the foreign students, are completely different than

what they are used to. The students, and the villagers, must communicate and interact with many people from different backgrounds, and living in the villagers' houses exacerbates the situation. However, projects often serve to distract the participants, by giving everyone a common goal to work towards. Religious and cultural dissimilarities can disappear quite quickly when work is to be done, though unfortunately, there have been cases where the staff has discussed removing disruptive students.

Overall the program has been a success, and Tumbelaya hopes that it will continue to serve as a model for inter-religious communication.

## Section IV – Discussions

Each discussion session lasted between 45 and 90 minutes, and a majority of participants took part. While the focus was on curriculum, a number of other issues arose in how to specifically cater the curriculum towards the students.



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One point that received a lot of attention during the question period after Reverend Lesher's keynote address was the idea of how to engage with those who may not want to be engaged, particularly the exclusionists discussed in Lesher's speech, and one other group: atheists.



A few of the participants stated that in order to have an honest discussion about religion, people must admit the faults and weaknesses of the religion they belong to, at the very same time as they extoll its virtues. This is not with the intention to convert, which was implied to be one of the major sticking points in dialogue between people of faith and, as Lesher put it, "people of conviction".

Anri Morimoto of ICU's Philosophy and Religion department showed a slide during this discussion, relating Leonard Swidler's "10 ground rules of Inter-religious and Inter-ideological Dialogue." One entry on the list was particularly appropriate to this part of the discussion.



#9. Participants must be at least minimally self-critical of both themselves and their own tradition.

The idea is that people must tell the truth about their own moral and ethical traditions, so that discussion partners can see that the discussion itself will be honest. Outside observers will be able to better listen to see within those religions the potential for peace-building, if they know the people in the dialogue are being honest about the less savoury aspects.

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Also, people with religious backgrounds must also realize that atheists are not morally directionless. They derive meaning in their lives from non-traditional sources, according to Bernard Adenay-Risakotta of IRCS-Yogya in Indonesia. They, “may not believe in God or Nirvana, but they have some faith that gives them meaning on how we relate to one another.”



Nancy Chapman, president of the United Board, added to Adenay-Risakotta’s comment by making a plea for attendees to “think about how to get close to all of our students, regardless of backgrounds.” In order for the goal of inter-religious understanding and peace-building to be reached, she believes that perhaps they “need to be more inclusive” and invite more representatives of the major Asian religions, and the non-religious, to take part.



As to creating dialogue with exclusivists, Liu Jiafeng of Central China Normal University noted that in his classes, the atheists were actually the students who did understand the commonality between religions. They see where the passion to do good things comes from, and can accept the potential that religions have for inter-cultural understanding. His students of “strong religious backgrounds” however, can’t accept this.



Leshar commented on this point by stating that teachers should remind their students that in pointing out the similarities and commonalities between religions, they are not trying to paint them with the same brush. Teachers should point out the “deep-seated affinities religions share”, but also express that the differences are very important, too.

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Valliammal Baskaran of Lady Doak College made the point that in India, some people could find it difficult to admit they don't believe in God, as they don't want to be looked down upon by other students. However, in regards to exclusionists, she related some of her own experience. When she takes students to visit Hindu temples to worship, sometimes she must explain why they must go. Students hesitate to enter because they feel they are doing something wrong.



At the end of the course, when she asks the students what they appreciate most about other religions, she said, "They come up with beautiful answers. Not about scriptures, but about life." Baskaran agrees with the need to show people the scriptures of other religions, but more importantly, she thinks that people need to be exposed to how others live in order to understand them.

In terms of discussion about curriculum creation for inter-religious understanding and peace-building programs, the attendees had quite a bit to say. All attendees agreed on a few key points however.

First, curriculum must be catered to the area it's being used in. Every religion has different cultural and religious backgrounds that must be heeded if inter-religious curriculum is going to be successful. It would be too difficult, many in attendance stated, to create one single curriculum that covers all. One example would be in Japan, which according to Shin Chiba of ICU, is a "thinly multi-religious setting, almost non-religious or atheist". He believes that there is a feeling of overlapping consensus among Japanese, solely because they are Japanese. Perhaps it's a good thing, he said, but this is "no dialogue or effort in trying to understand one another."

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Second, teachers must be trained to have a goal and teaching methodology that they can tailor to their own communities, but they must also have a general framework, a common vocabulary, within which to communicate with other researchers. If a common framework exists, those teachers can then go out and teach new people, expanding the sphere of peace-building exponentially, and maintaining that connection to other regions around Asia.

In terms of what teachers should be teaching, there was some disagreement in details, but the general ideas seemed to share a great amount of support. Almost every person taking part in discussion said, in one way or another, that curriculum should focus not on religions themselves, but on how religious people of different faiths react to the world in different ways.

Historical interactions between religions are important, said one attendee, particularly in the rich historical base of Asia. Another said that the deeper political and economic realities surrounding religious conflict should be explored so that students can understand the ways in which religion is used as a tool, a scapegoat even, for those who wish to cause others harm.



Finally every speaker agreed that interaction with students is of prime importance. Dr. Avron Boretz of the United Board said that the comments “that have stuck with me” were those comments that detailed the ways in which students could participate. “Students as equals, a part of the process” is an important idea, he said, because they wouldn’t be treated as “targets” of the curriculum, but as full on partners in creating it.

## CONCLUSION

After two days of formal discussion, and three days of informal talks, the final discussion of the day focused on the “what” and “how” of curriculum creation. It had taken three days, but the ideas seemed to already be in place before the discussion began, the discussion itself was perhaps just a formality. The conclusions and plans can be best summed up in three points.

First, many attendees stressed the need for local networks. Dr. Boretz told the audience that the United Board has been considering some sort of regional or ideational cluster system. Setting up clusters would allow for better communication between similarly minded groups, and also aid those researchers who perhaps don't have large networks in their own communities. Starting with smaller local networks, and joining them into overlapping regional networks would be one way of keeping the larger areas communicating with each other . Adenay-Risakotta did make one point, that he was worried about the idea of being separated from the other groups outside his own network.

“I think we learn more from the differences that we do from the similarities,” he said. In a reference to both the dialogue between the universities and the service learning projects in Indonesia shown by Tumbelaka, he said, “Going into a different environment, there's a tremendous amount of learning that goes on just because of the huge differences.”

The second plan was for the creation of a primary task force, dedicated to creating a blueprint for the eventual curriculum. The first task force would be made of representatives from all regions, and would lay the ground work for a curriculum, the materials for which would come later.



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According to one attendee, one possible curriculum item could be in teacher training in religion, for those teachers who aren't as knowledgeable about other faiths as they wish to be.

Finally, in terms of content, all attendees seemed to agree with the statement made by a participant toward the end, "Doing is the best method of teaching."

Workshops were discussed as a method for allowing training of both teachers and students, but as mentioned by Dr. Boretz in the last few minutes, "Training of trainers is a priority." In other words, if the teachers weren't taught how to teach the subject matter properly, it wouldn't matter how good the material was.

At least for the present time, the question of content would be tabled. When there is a more concrete roadmap for where the curriculum should go, once the task force has made its recommendations based upon the experience of its members, the group as a whole would begin the material-making and detailed curriculum design process.

Once these three items had been decided, the conference was essentially over. United Board's Nancy Chapman and Dr. Boretz were the last two to speak.

Chapman, in response to a question from ICU's Alternate Chair, Kana Yamamoto, restated the United Board's desire to hear more voices, to hear from more people, particularly those people who weren't represented during the conference this time.

"All of us are struck by who is not here at the gathering today: people from major Asian religions, or atheists/people of conviction," she said. "We want to engage them."

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She also told the attendees that the United Board is “deeply convinced of the value of this work (now), and the long term value.”

Dr. Boretz stated that he was reluctant to sum up, because it felt like the “action-based” collaboration had just begun. He reiterated Chapman’s support of the program, and in answer to a question from the audience about how long the United Board would continue to support it, he said,

“Inter-religious understanding and peace-building is something that United Board has stood for, and will always stand for. Unless World Peace gets achieved in the next 3 years we will continue to support this. This is not the end. It’s just the end of this particular session.”