

Evaluation of PROK - Toronto Visit

May 30, 2017 in College St. United  
Meeting chaired by David Allen

1. Youth ministry was an area which the PROK delegates wanted to experience.

Heo Jangkang began as Seoul presbytery youth committee, speaking of their experience of lack of youth in Korean churches for reasons like the pressures of study or competition or family issues that keep them from church. For them, the philosophy of ministry for those in charge of youth ministry is important, and finding good leaders to meet, support and guide youth. It would be ideal to have Christian formation take place in the family, but since it doesn't, the church needs to take this role. So they were interested to see what Toronto Conference does in this field.

David Allen noted Toronto Conference puts its youth leadership development emphasis on large events rather than local church youth work, like the Go Project being visited tomorrow and Youth at Conference. Are there reflections from those who attended Youth at Conference? Jeon Dawit was surprised at the openness of the leaders. Ahn Jeongkyu was impressed by the pre-conference session and the sharing in table groups, although he would have liked the opportunity for more theological reflection.

2. What are reflections on churches visited by Koreans?

Oh Myung hee and Oh Eunhi visited Meadowvale Church and reflected that Sarah Yoon is like a mother to the congregation. There were about 30 members for worship and they were impressed by the elders who joined the choir for the anthem. Elder Myung Hee reflected further on the courage exhibited at the AGM in dealing with LGBT issues, and committed herself to praying for marginalized people.

Park Seon Young from Kyungdong church, one of the biggest PROK churches in Seoul, with weekly attendance of 700, visited Nottawa and Rob Rob congregations, with attendance of about 20-30 and 30-40 respectively, but felt very warmly welcome there and had a new and deep awareness of Jesus' teaching of community while she was there, which isn't felt in her big church.

Yi Hye Jin spoke about the AGM and how impressed she was at participation of women and disabled people. She referred to the table groups and the discussion found there, as well as the practice of allowing retirees to choose a song and have an opportunity to talk about their ministries, and the ordination with the variety of people who laid hands on the candidates, the variety of clergy garb and the music.

Huh Kwang Sub mentioned the informal garb of the meeting, and that he was impressed that agenda and reports came to delegates before meeting, and people can clarify their thoughts through informed discussion before making decisions.

Kim Tae Woong expressed he felt winds of change that are coming in the discussion of affirming congregations. It will be important to let this wind blow in Korea too. Although pastors would find it hard to challenge the view of LGBT in Korea, there is an important role for elders like himself, who can more freely speak in support of such an issue.

3. What are ways this PROK-Toronto Conference partnership can develop? What would be our hopes and dreams?

Jeon Dawit said he isn't sure of the full meaning of partnership, but is afraid we will talk and not do anything. So he asks, can't we just continue to learn from and help one another?

Dan Benson noted Dawit had spoken very effectively to his congregation and he would like to see congregation to congregation twinning relationships.

Audrey Brown looks forward to one result of partnership as youth from PROK take part in the GO Project and church camps.

Sarah Yoon told a story of her first English church when she prepared copies of sermon for members of congregation. An elder told her not to as "Now we must learn your pronunciation". She said we now are called to share and understand one another ~ through the seeds that have been planted through these visits.

Mary Elizabeth suggested three month pulpit exchanges take place between Seoul and Toronto Conference. Jo Ik Pyo said to do such a thing there would have to be dialogue dealing with concrete issues of minister's situations. He also noted a differences in understand he has experienced here ~ the attitude of the western press and people about pending war in Korea, which is not felt by the Koreans.

Yi Hye Jin would like to know more clearly the situation of ordained women and talk with women ministers. Jessica wondered how to develop resources that could be used between congregations for worship, Bible studies, small groups, so we could intentionally be praying for each other.

4. What things were appreciated or wished done differently?

Jessica ~ wish Brantford school visit had been led by First Nations guide  
Catherine~ impressed by choice of churches/ministries to visit. Group had good learnings from them.

Jo Ik Pyo impressed by tight schedule.

Yun Bright felt visit to business session of AGM too difficult.

Yi Hye Jin appreciated the AGM and felt the options given took that pressure off.

David Allen wished that in Seoul there had been time to learn what information Seoul people wanted Toronto people to bring home for sharing.

Executive discussion:

Jo Ik Pyo reflected briefly on three stages of mission ~ a) Canadians spreading Gospel b) leadership in the Korean church c) both having equal responsibility and duties in partnership exchange.

David Allen noted Toronto Conference will cease to exist. In the new Region, a portion of funds going in could be earmarked to use for something like five years in exchange.

When Toronto came to Seoul, the Conference covered expenses. The Seoul delegates paid their own expenses with help from their local churches (which is also the way most UCC exchanges take place).

An Mijung said the Mission Committee of Seoul presbytery initiated the exchange. She sees special exchanges around interests like women, lay ministers, youth, interfaith, ecology, etc., groups divided for experience and learning ~ and being self-funded Richard Choe and Jessica McCrae have volunteered to be on planning committee from Toronto with David Allen as staff support.

In Seoul the Mission Committee will work on exchange, with office support from Presbytery Office.

Seoul Presbytery has had an exchange every two years with Japan for 10 years. Exchange with Toronto could happen every two or three years.

Seoul Presbytery has already agreed it wants to go ahead with partnership and would like an agreement in written form.

Toronto Conference Executive will meet in September and discuss partnership then with a specific funding proposal. Then will contact Seoul with results.

Prepared by Catherine Christie