

“For God is not a God of confusion but of peace.”

I Corinthians 14:33

Muslim and Christian Youth Want Peace

A Muslim man, and a Christian woman with the Interfaith Cooperation Forum (ICF) organized a three-day peace workshop. Twenty Muslim, Christian and Hindu young people met to discuss efforts that have been made to bring about peace in their communities. “People want to forgive, but not forget,” said a villager from a community where Muslims and Christians are learning to live in peace again after fifteen years of periodic violence.

I asked the participants to reflect on why people fight wars. The list included division based on one’s identity (including religious identity), poverty, unemployment, and weak legal systems that foment corruption and impunity. The workshop included field visits to villages still facing conflict and to some that have achieved reconciliation between Muslims and Christians. This exposure gave us new insights into the current reality in the area. Villagers were adamant that they do not want the violence to return, that the violence benefits no one.

A Lutheran pastor and the leader of a Muslim youth group were presenters. The Lutheran pastor said that in his interfaith program the Muslim youth speak at the church council meetings, and that Christian youth speak at the Muslim centers. Meanwhile, the Muslim leader said the Muslim youth group protects churches on Christmas.

This workshop gave me a lot of hope for the future of interfaith relationships in Central Indonesia. The organizers received 70 applications for the 20 places in the workshop, indicating that there is a lot of interest, especially among its youth. Creating and nurturing relationships is one of the strongest safeguards to ensure that the two faith communities can live together peacefully as neighbors in the future.

Bruce Van Voorhis serves as missionary with the Asia and Pacific Alliance of YMCAs in Hong Kong. His appointment is made possible by your gifts to Disciples Mission Fund, Our Churches Wider Mission, and your special gifts.



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