HSINCHU, Taiwan: The first-ever Asian Ecumenical Women’s Assembly (AEWA) organized by the Christian Conference of Asia (CCA) was opened in a celebrative worship service held at the Presbyterian Bible College (PBC) auditorium in Hsinchu, Taiwan. The Assembly has convened around the theme, ‘Arise, Be Awake to Reconcile, Renew, and Restore the Creation’.
Archbishop Dr Willem Simarmata, CCA Moderator, who opened with a powerful observation stated, “I see the reality of our global Christianity, especially in Asia, that the churches have been transformed into ‘churches of women’. The power of women is extraordinary in determining the future direction of Christianity.”

In his introductory remarks and welcome address, Dr Mathews George Chunakara, the General Secretary of the CCA said, “Improvements in the status of women are evident in different fields, and these transformations have been made possible by strengthened institutions and legal systems, demographic transitions, and a more dynamic civil society. However, we are on the trajectory towards a less inclusive and more unequal world.”

The CCA General Secretary said, “The expected outcome of AEWA is not merely to address or talk about gender representation within churches, but to reflect and strategize ways in which church and society can be further sensitized.”

He appealed to the participants of the ecumenical gathering by saying, “It is our collective task to create conditions for identifying, motivating, building, and enabling a diverse range of women leaders to hone their talents and bear formidable challenges.”

“To reconcile is to renew and restore relationships. AEWA offers the space to interpret the multiple meanings of the theme and apply them practically in our contemporary contexts,” said Dr Mathews George.

Rev Kyrie Kim, the Moderator of the CCA’s Programme Committee, and Rev Lyien Chieng-Mei, extended greetings at the opening session.

The opening worship was led by participants from various Asian countries, together with members from the host church, the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan.

Rev Dr Henriette Hutabarat Lebang, Chairperson of the PGI (Persekutuan Gereja di Indonesia) and former General Secretary of the CCA delivered a homily based on the text Isaiah 32:9-20.

Rev Dr Henriette described the biblical text as a ‘disturbing call to repentance’, stating that the complexity and interconnectedness of today’s problems inherently affect everyone. Due to growing polarization, competition, and pervasive individualism, she said that the ‘whole creation is suffering due to the greed of a few people who exploit all others and nature beyond its limit’.

“In this Asian Ecumenical Women’s Assembly, we are called by the Prophet Isaiah to pause for a while, to look at the face of our world today, the suffering of many people due to injustices,” said Dr Lebang to the participants.

More than 250 women from different denominations and churches are attending the Assembly.
Four thematic presentations based on the main theme and sub-themes, panel presentations on various Asian subjects, participant-led Bible Studies, workshops, and inter-faith dialogue sessions will be part of the agenda of the five-day assembly.