

Dialogue must replace violence

Kowloon Union Church

(September 30, 2014) Kowloon Union Church (KUC), an international and ecumenical church with members from 20 countries, expresses its admiration for the courage, persistence and creativity of the university and high school students and others in the community who have been taking part in the continuous and ongoing demonstrations for the democratic development of Hong Kong. Whether the protesters are Christians or not, they have exhibited the Christian value of giving oneself for the sake of others. In this case, it is not only for the sake of other individuals but for the common good of Hong Kong.

We are similarly moved by those in the community who have selflessly given food, water, first aid, etc., to support the demonstrators in numerous ways. Again, whether they are Christians or not, they have offered their care and compassion for others, especially others who are under great stress and who are feeling fear, are anxious and vulnerable. It is these acts of solidarity that bind us together as one community.

We have witnessed the peaceful approach of the protesters who wish to express their desire for genuine universal suffrage and their dissatisfaction with the recent proposal of the Chinese and Hong Kong governments for political reform in our city, on one hand, and the violent reaction of the police, on the other, who have responded with tear gas and pepper spray to people's discontent. Many people have asked the simple question: Why? Why are the police—Hong Kong people—attacking Hong Kong people?

As a community of faith, we call upon the Hong Kong government to stop using violence to suppress the people who are protesting peacefully to express their views on Hong Kong's democratic development. It is the responsibility of the government to protect her people, uphold human rights and respect people's human dignity.

We, as citizens of Hong Kong, support universal suffrage based on one person, one vote, but the participation of voters in choosing their leaders is a hollow electoral exercise if competition to choose and nominate candidates is limited and restricted. A leader chosen under the proposed political system may be welcome by the Chinese government, but it will result in a weak Hong Kong government that lacks legitimacy in the eyes of Hong Kong's people and will be able to achieve little to better the lives of the citizens of the community.

To resolve the current impasse over political reform, the Chinese and Hong Kong governments will have to genuinely listen to the people of Hong Kong and engage in meaningful dialogue with them. Achieving this aim will require courage, persistence and creativity—qualities that are now being lived out on the streets of Hong Kong.

We pray that the spirit of love and peace will guide the people and the government in Hong Kong. May God bless Hong Kong with wisdom and with peace.