



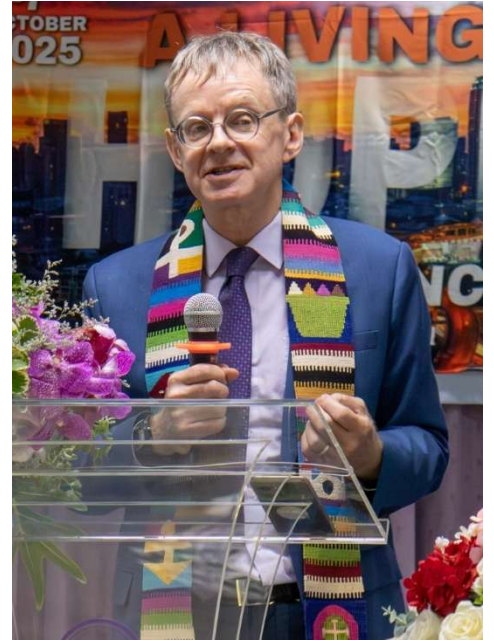
Report on the eighth worldwide conference of the International Prison Chaplains Association (IPCA), Bangkok, 2-7 October 2025



Background

IPCA is an ecumenical association founded in Bossey, Switzerland in 1985 to "unite, equip and encourage a global network of prison chaplains, sharing the love of God and restoring justice".

IPCA usually holds a worldwide conference every five years. This includes a General Assembly during which the President of the Worldwide Steering Committee and its members, representing IPCA's six regions, are recognised. Due to the Covid pandemic, the planned 2020 conference was postponed to 2025. Given these exceptional circumstances, David Buick was co-opted as President by the outgoing committee in 2020 to ensure the survival of the association and prepare the 2025 conference on the basis of the original plans for 2020.



Aims and achievements:

Gathering as many chaplains as possible from across Christianity and around the globe.

The event brought together over 120 chaplains from over 30 countries spanning IPCA's six regions; Europe/Middle East and Africa had the highest numbers of delegates. Four Muslim chaplains from Sweden also attended; one was invited to co-lead a workshop on interfaith in prison.



Revitalising IPCA after the 2020 crisis, demonstrating the benefit of such an event and passing on the vision to newcomers

The conference showed that IPCA is alive and well, in particular in its role at the United Nations where it has consultative status with the Economic and Social Council. In the words of James Ridge, chaplain general for England and Wales, keynote speaker and panellist, it was "an absolutely wonderful conference. Both the content and the interactions were helpful and uplifting". Others welcomed the diversity and complementary nature of the programme: plenaries, a panel discussion, workshops and testimonies covering topics including women in prison, restorative justice, the death penalty, 'chaplaincy 101' as well as times of worship. The benefits of meeting in person were clear; many delegates returned home keen to organise similar events in their regions. Our guests were extremely impressed by the engagement and enthusiasm of the chaplains in attendance.



Asserting IPCA's desire not to be a purely 'western' organisation

While the conference welcomed guests from across the world, there were also delegates and speakers from Thailand who embodied this ambition. In particular, there were contributions from the Thailand Institute of Justice (TIJ), a leading NGO in UN circles, represented at the conference by its Executive Director (opening speech), a project leader (panel discussion) and its special advisor (keynote) who is a former head of prisons in Thailand. The TIJ also loaned an exhibition on the Bangkok Rules on the treatment of women prisoners, staffed by two of its employees. Visits to two prisons were organised for some



delegates. One of the highlights of the conference was the testimony of a Bangkok prison chaplain who has built up a ministry in several prison alongside a resettlement programme that is seeing positive results: some of the beneficiaries were also there to tell their stories and lead one of the times of worship.

Improving the association's administrative structures

The conference allowed a General Meeting to be held for the first time in ten years, including a President's report, the ratification of a financial report, the adoption of a Conference Declaration, the appointment of a new President and the formal recognition of new regional representatives (appointed by each region). Much remains to be done, but IPCA has much improved governance and legitimacy as a result.

Celebrating IPCA's 40th anniversary

An exhibition reviewing the first 40 years of IPCA was presented in digital format; for the first time, this excellent archive document gives a structured overview of the history of the association.



Staying on budget



Despite the considerable geopolitical and economic challenges and drastic banking restrictions, we were able to organise the finances via a dedicated bank account opened by the host organisation, the Church of Christ in Thailand. With the help of

gifts from Christian organisations in Thailand, the income for the conference covered expenditure; the surplus is being left as a gift to develop prison ministry in Thailand.

Conclusion:

We give thanks to God for this opportunity to rediscover and reaffirm the 'Living Hope' of the Gospel which is so badly needed in prison.

Report by David Buick