

ACUCA 2018 Student Camp in Thailand, 10 – 14 October 2018

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This year, I had the opportunity to participate in the ACUCA 2018 Student Camp held at the Christian University of Thailand (CUT) in Nakhon Pathom, Thailand. Being a part of the ACUCA Student Camp would surely be one of the best moments in my life; I have never had so much fun before. I would like to give you an idea of what it is like to be a member of this amazing camp by briefly describing what we did each day.

Things did not start so well for those of us who departed from Tokyo and Nagoya. Once we arrived at Suvarnabhumi Airport, we were to head to CUT by car but what would normally have taken us only two hours took us twice as long due to heavy traffic. By the time we got there, dinner was already over and the rest of the participants were engaging in the next activity. Luckily for us, the staff were so kind as to leave plenty of food for those who could not make it to dinner.

After an early breakfast, we had our first activity of the day: listening to Reverend Dr. Jim E. Wilder's keynote talk on what our perception of "my people" had been before the advent of the Internet, and how it has changed after that. I found it intriguing that not only have our criteria of "my people" changed, but the ways we interact with others have seen changes as well. The next activity that we did was giving our presentations on the main theme: "The Internet's Impact on Identity and Character Development of Students in Asian Christian Higher Education: Issues and Solutions." We all watched videos that the students had made, and presenters using a digital format were each assigned a room to present in. Those who planned to give a poster presentation were told, however, there would not be enough time for them to present. I was one of them. I had put a considerable amount of time and effort into preparing and practicing for my presentation, so backing down was not an option. I asked one of the camp organizers if I could make my presentation in one of the rooms for those presenting using a digital format, and my request was accepted. After the end of the presentation session, some of the students and teachers complimented me on my presentation. I was glad that I had made the decision to take action.

The third day was set aside for discussions. We had a discussion on how the Internet has changed the way we interact with one another, and what we could do as students in Christian universities to put a stop to excessive cell phone usage. Unlike when I am in Japan where hardly anyone willingly expresses their opinion in a discussion, everyone in my group was eager to make a contribution. Despite the short time we had to have a discussion and design a poster based on what we had discussed, thanks to the cooperation of my group mates, it seems we did fairly well on both of the tasks. In the afternoon, we had another discussion, but this time, with other participants from our own country, and we gave a presentation in front of many professors and other university personnel from all over Asia.

On the fourth day, we went on a field trip. Our first stop was the Nativity of Our Lady Cathedral. It was very interesting to see a French Gothic style church in Thailand. It felt as if I were somewhere in Europe. We only stayed there for a short while, and after we stopped for lunch, we visited the famous Amphawa Floating Market. All kinds of stands and stores selling food, clothes, and accessories were there, and what astonished us the most was how cheap the products were. The market was filled with locals and tourists, so there was hardly

any space for us to wait for our friends to catch up. By the time we got back to the bus, we were all sweaty and exhausted, but we felt that we had a great time nonetheless.

Looking back on my time at the Camp, there were so many wonderful memories that I simply cannot say which one is the best. If there is one thing, however, that made a lasting impression on me, that would be the love and compassion that my friends had shown me. My experience at the ACUCA Student Camp was truly amazing and is most certainly a memory that I will treasure for the rest of my life. Lastly, I would like to thank Nanzan University for providing me with an opportunity to participate in this wonderful event.