

Indonesian church leader, politician Willem T. P. Simarmata dies at 68

by [Dawn Araujo-Hawkins](#) in the [July 27, 2022](#) issue



(Instagram)

Willem T. P. Simarmata, Indonesian politician and moderator of the Christian Conference of Asia, died June 17 at the age of 68.

Simarmata, widely seen as one of the most influential leaders of the Asian ecumenical movement, also served as head of Indonesia's largest non-Catholic denomination, the Batak Christian Protestant Church, from 2012 to 2016.

In a statement, Mathews George Chunakara, general secretary of the Christian Conference of Asia, called Simarmata's death a great loss to the Asian ecumenical movement.

"He was a very fine human being, and was pastoral in his approach. He dealt with everyone in a true spirit of nobility," Chunakara said. "He personified a charisma in his leadership and with a special grace in him, and he mentored and inspired people, exemplifying the message that dignity and honour are gifts from God."

According to Chunakara, Simarmata was best known for his devotion to creation care, gender equality, and the wellbeing of marginalized groups.

In 2019, Simarmata was elected to the Indonesian House of Regional Representatives, an achievement Chunakara credited to the strength of Simarmata's character.

"His deep commitment and passion enabled him to strive for communal harmony by developing strong interfaith relationships, especially with the Muslim majority in his country, for the common good," he said.

Ioan Sauca, acting general secretary of the World Council of Churches, knew Simarmata through his work on the WCC central committee, which began in 2013.

"As a truthful, accountable, and inspiring leader, he was a shining example of exemplary leadership to people all over the world," Sauca said.