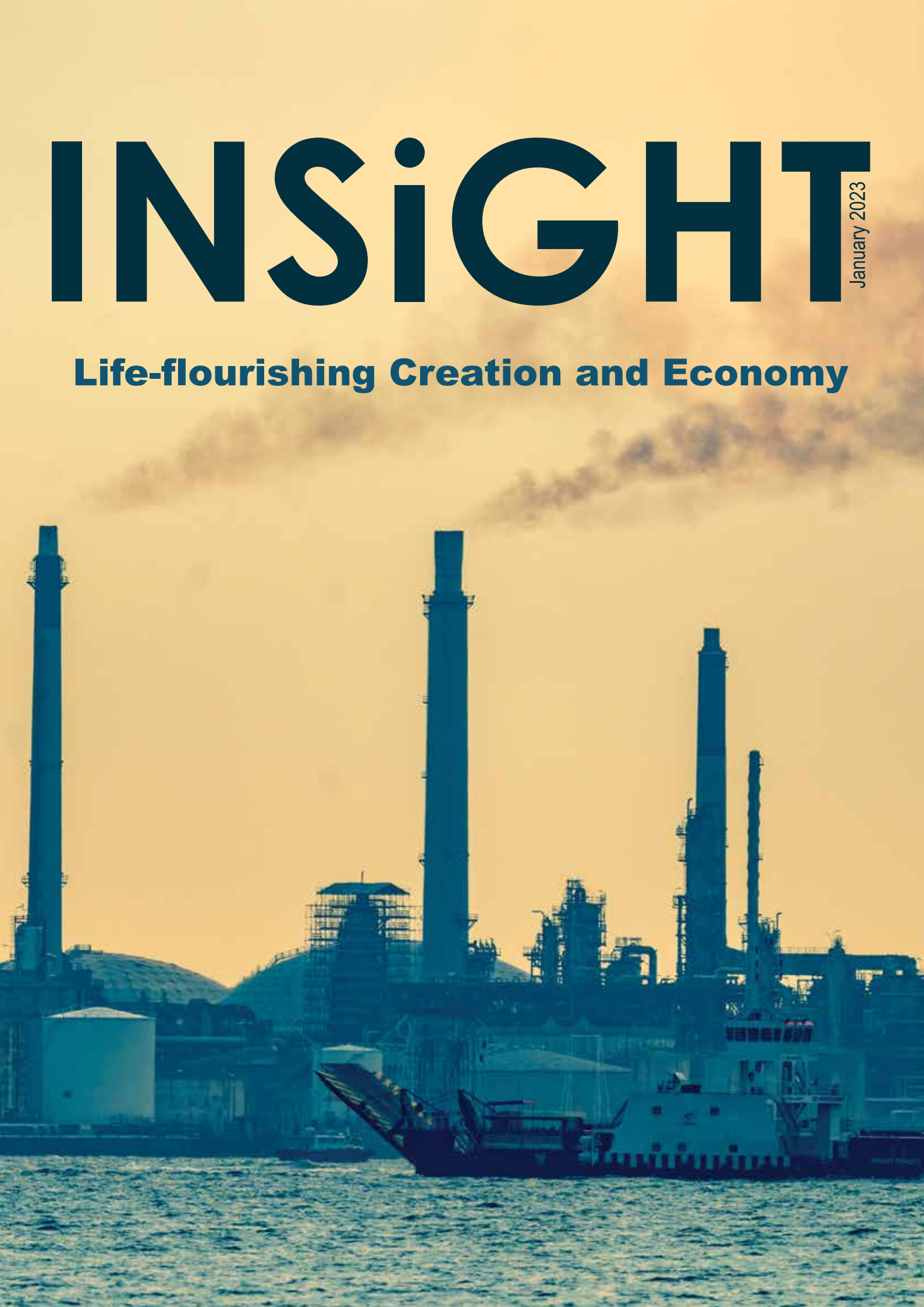
INSiGHT

January 2023

Life-flourishing Creation and Economy



INSiGHT

January 2023

CONTENTS

FOREWORD

Life-flourishing is the key motif for the mission and discipleship of the Council for World Mission (CWM). Through it, CWM aims to challenge the oppressive and life-denying systems and confess witness to life-flourishing creation and economy. It is also our core missional agenda that will enable churches to participate in creating Life-Flourishing communities, reflecting ecological integrity and climate justice.

Our planet earth has been going through a great threat of climate change. It is affecting people from all sections of life and destabilising the entire ecosystem on the planet. Driven by greed, self-centeredness, destructive economic policies, and corruption, the rich and privileged are intensifying the climate crises while the poor and oppressed suffer from the consequences.

According to the UN Climate watch, about 60% of GHG emissions come from just ten countries, while the hundred least-emitting contributed less than 3%.

Witnessing such a crisis, CWM calls its member churches and ecumenical partners with the missional agenda of enabling churches to participate in creating Life-Flourishing communities, reflecting ecological integrity, and promoting ecological and economic justice.

FOREWORD

On the other hand, CWM also recognises that the planet on which we live needs a new order of financial and economic governance. A neo-liberal model continues to dominate the global economy, with increasingly negative consequences, like socio-economic inequalities and polarisations, ecological destruction, a culture of violence at all levels of society, and insecurity of employment. As Rev. Daimon elaborated in his overview of CWM's Life-flourishing Economy and ecology, the process of the New International Financial and Economic Architecture (NIFEA), leading to the development of the Theological Education for an Economy of Life (TEEL) programme, is an example of an alternative economy of life that we have adopted as a necessary and deliberate strategy of CWM for creating capacity to overcome injustice. Dr Cynthia Moe-Lobeda rightly articulated that where systemic injustice causes suffering, seeking the well-being or good of those who suffer—actively loving—entails challenging that injustice.

CWM is strongly committed to engaging with the member churches and ecumenical partners to promote justice for the vulnerable creation and communities and foster life-flourishing ecology and economy through various programmes and activities. This issue of INSiGHT will bring forth an in-depth understanding of CWM's commitment towards building a sustainable future through various programmatic activities to mobilise communities for prophetic witness in ecology and economy.

I am pleased to present you with the first INSiGHT of the year 2023, which comes with updates on various activities of the CWM, news of the member churches and ecumenical organisations. This INSiGHT is mainly dedicated to providing an in-depth overview of one of CWM's six primary programmatic areas—Life-flourishing Creation and Economy—its vision, programmatic focus, and engagement with the member churches as well as the wider ecumenical community.

May the God of life empower us to stand in solidarity with creation and witness to God's justice.

Rev. Dr Jooseop Keum
General Secretary
Council for World Mission

AT A GLANCE

CWM holds New Year Holy Communion Service and Management Team Meeting

Council for World Mission (CWM) held its New Year Service with Holy Communion during the staff devotion on 9 January 2023 at 5:00 PM Singapore, attended in-person by staff in Singapore and virtually by CWM global staff from various regions. The liturgy was led by Mission Secretary – Ecology & Economy, Rev. Daimon Mkandawire, with the CWM General Secretary, Rev. Dr Jooseop Keum delivering the sermon.

During the sermon based on Proverbs 16:1-6 and Matthew 5:14-16, the General Secretary mentioned "perma-crisis" as Collins Word of the Year. It reflects the ongoing crisis faced by the world such as pandemics, military conflicts, climate crises, and social, political and economic inequalities, driven by life-threatening forces such as greed, self-centred motives, and corruption that destroy life and peace, said Dr Keum.

Dr Keum also emphasized that a perma-crisis presents a perma-opportunity where God will meet and understand us in our deepest crisis. The gospel of the reign of God challenges a world that retains the status quo of hopelessness, and CWM, as a community of transforming disciples, will have the courage to let God's love and peace shine brightly in the world.

Dr Keum also emphasized that a perma-crisis presents a perma-opportunity where God will meet and understand us in our deepest crisis. The gospel of the reign of God challenges a world that retains the status quo of hopelessness, and CWM, as a community of transforming disciples, will have the courage to let God's love and peace shine brightly in the world.

The first in-person Management Meeting was held over the next two days as CWM leaders received updates, deliberated on issues and discussed programme development and planning for 2023.

After the opening prayer for a renewed passion and commitment to God's mission, the mission secretaries presented detailed plans for the first quarter of their respective programme areas under the New Programmatic Structure.

Dr Keum urged CWM leaders to confidently step up in faith and compassion in responding to ongoing crisis. "CWM has to play a role in encouraging member churches and ecumenical partners by contributing to the ecumenical movement despite fears of a global recession" he said.

In view of the forthcoming CWM Assembly in 2024, Dr Keum invited the management for a brainstorming session on various aspects of the Assembly. Since there has been a long gap from the previous Assembly, and the global community is still in crisis in this post-pandemic context, he stressed the strategic importance of the Assembly to provide spiritual and missional accompaniment to the member churches. He emphasised that as we pay attention to the signs of times, the theme of the Assembly must not only address the global context but also the context of the host region. He encouraged the Management Team to continue to reflect upon various aspects of the Assembly to further strengthen the spiritual aspects of the Assembly.

The Management Team warmly welcomed Mission Secretary – Discipleship and Dialogue & Europe Region Rev. Dr Graham Mc Geoch, who commenced work on 1 January 2023, and Mission Secretary – Education and Empowerment & Pacific Region Rev. Dr Amelia Koh-Butler, who will be on board on 1 March 2023. Impressed by the treasure trove of mission history found in the Singapore office, Rev. Dr Koh-Butler said, "It is such a privilege to be learning new ways to engage in mission following in the tradition of the faithful."

CWM General Secretary comforts bereaved families of the Itaewon disaster


(Photo: Kidokkongbo, PCK)

On 26 December 2022, CWM General Secretary, Rev. Dr Jooseop Keum visited a memorial altar installed by bereaved families of the victims of the Itaewon disaster in Seoul to offer his condolences, accompanied by Moderator of the Presbyterian Church of Korea (PCK), Rev. Soon Chang LEE.

During the visit, Dr Keum comforted the bereaved families at the altar located at Itaewon Square near the site of the accident, which had occurred on the fateful night of 29 October 2022 during a Halloween celebration. The CWM General Secretary said, "We will share the pain of the victims and bereaved families of the Itaewon disaster with the churches around the world so that they can pray together."

"We will share the pain of the victims and bereaved families of the Itaewon disaster with the churches around the world so that they can pray together."

Following the lifting of COVID-19 restrictions in South Korea, massive crowds had gathered for the first Halloween celebration held in three years in the Itaewon district of Seoul, and an unfortunate stampede occurred, resulting in at least 354 casualties.

"God is with us to bear our pains and Christians all over the world are in sorrow with the same heart. The CWM family will be with the Korean churches and people in our prayers and cooperate in anything that helps," added Dr Keum.

Mr. Lee Jong-cheol, president of '10.29 Itaewon Disaster Bereaved Family Council' said, "It is a great comfort to visit and encourage us in person. The Itaewon disaster is an unsafe social structural problem and should never happen again."

CWM and Global Institute of Theology sign MOU to strengthen theological education and faculty development

CWM and Global Institute of Theology (GIT)* have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) during a Partnership Consultation held on 8-11 December in Singapore.

Aimed at strengthening theological education and advancing studies in mission in the Global South, the event was attended by Dean of the United Graduate School of Theology (UGST), Yonsei University, Prof. Samuel Y. Pang, Assistant Professor of World Christianity and Mission Studies, GIT, Prof. Chammah J. Kaunda, CWM General Secretary Rev. Dr Jooseop Keum, CWM Deputy General Secretary Dr Sudipta Singh, and several GIT and CWM representatives.

Noticing the gradual shift in theological students from Asian and African continents opting to pursue theological studies in their own contexts, this MOU will establish partnership in theological education by facilitating post-graduate and doctoral studies, and facilitate research in the areas of missions, World Christianity, and post-colonial studies.

Welcoming this new milestone, CWM General Secretary noted in his opening remarks, “CWM and GIT are committed to bringing a new model of theological education in the context of the global south. Our partnership will foster ecumenical learning and missional formation beyond borders and provide opportunities for contextual immersion.”

During the UGST Dean’s greetings, Prof Yang said: “Korean churches received so many gifts from all over the world in the past. Yonsei University was founded by American missionaries in 1885. Our partnership is a way to show our appreciation to the global churches.”

Both organisations have identified key areas of partnership in academic theological scholarship, and faculty support. They will therefore collaborate in academic accompaniment for selected students from CWM member churches and ecumenical partners and fostering faculty development in theological institutions in the Global South.

This MOU will establish partnership in theological education by facilitating post-graduate and doctoral studies, and facilitate research in the areas of missions, World Christianity, and post-colonial studies.

Global Institute of Theology (GIT) *is a postgraduate program established in 2015 by Yonsei University as an intellectual response to the shift in the centre of Christianity activities to Asia, Africa, and Latin America. GIT is located at Yonsei International Campus in Songdo, Incheon.*

CWM calls for prayer and solidarity with Myanmar after medical personnel are sentenced to 12 years' imprisonment

CWM renewed its call on its member churches to come alongside in solidarity and intercessory prayer for those suffering from the military coup in Myanmar, following news that 9 female medical personnel aged 25 and below, who are believed to be Christian, received sentences of 12 years' imprisonment in Kalay military prison court in Sagaing, Myanmar.

Zam Zo Zam, Man Lwin Dim, Niang Don Cin, Malsawm Dongi, Lal Tan Luaii, Lal Lun Sangi, Lal Mon Kimi, Van Ruati, and Lal Van Pari are all ethnic Chin people, and were charged under Section 505 (A, B, C), Anti-Terrorism Acts and Natural Disaster Management Law, according to independent local news agency The Chindwin.[1]

The All Burma Federation of Student Unions, which played a role in the protest movement which saw Ms Aung San Suu Kyi emerge as a leader in 1988, had planned protests across the country last year[2]. Regrettably, the 9 female medical staff who are part of local anti-junta armed resistance were not among the 6,000 prisoners who were granted amnesty lately.

Presbyterian Church of Myanmar (PCM), a CWM member church, supported victims of the Spring Revolution through its Covid and Crisis Response Committee (CCRC) and the Agape Hospital, which it operates, to care for Internally Displaced Persons (IDP).

In response to the protracted suffering of the Myanmese, CWM has resolutely stood in solidarity, holding a World Day of Prayer, and sending a Solidarity and Action Grant to PCM.

During the prayer service, PCM Women & Youth Secretary Mrs Van Lal Hming Sangi said, "In this situation, Presbyterian women in Myanmar want you to remember Jeremiah's prophecy from 29:1-14, to pray on behalf of the city that you live in. Jeremiah's letter exposed the political and social tensions of his time, but also a promise to guide them to their future: 'I know the plans I have for you.' We need to pray together earnestly where there is justice for all, especially for those who are the most vulnerable."

She added that "We believe that God has plans for us, plans for good and not for harm. It is our turn to put in action our hope for the future. God is always with us, even when it may be difficult to understand."

CWM also organised a Roundtable Meeting in Singapore for PCM partners to discuss and discern how they could strategically support PCM as a global network of churches and ecumenical partners. During the event held from 2-3 August 2022 in Singapore, PCM General Secretary Rev. Ramthanga highlighted the PCM's current needs of space and buildings for an oxygen generator as part of the pandemic response, as well as the Agape Relocation Project in the Children Development Centre.

[1]https://www.thechindwin.com/myanmars-junta-regime-sentences-nine-medical-team-members-to-12-years-jail-term-in-sagaging-region/
[2]https://www.economist.com/briefing/2021/02/06/myanmars-coup-turns-the-clock-back-a-decade?

"We believe that God has plans for us, plans for good and not for harm. It is our turn to put in action our hope for the future. God is always with us, even when it may be difficult to understand."

CWM Core Group meeting of The Onesimum Project

CWM held a fruitful Core Group Meeting to concretise plans for The Onesimus Project (TOP) from November 28th to December 2nd in London. The meeting commenced with worship by CWM Mission Secretary Rev. Dr Michael Jagessar, followed by an inaugural address by CWM General Secretary Rev. Dr Jooseop Keum.

The CWM General Secretary stated that the theology of Jubilee is found in the Old Testament (Leviticus 25:8-10) and declared that this project goes beyond decolonisation to aiming for liberation. Rather than viewing TOP through the lens of the Apostle Paul, Dr Keum asserted that TOP is viewed from the perspective of Onesimus. Onesimus went beyond being a useful and faithful servant, to a transforming disciple who became the Bishop of Ephesus, martyred for liberating gospel for slavery.

Underscoring the deeply missional nature of the project, the CWM General Secretary stated that "we cannot speak of 'partnership in mission' while keeping injustice in our midst."

"Justice is imperative for unity, and it demands radical transformation. We need to create a vision for bringing transformation and building a future rooted in justice." Dr Keum explained.

Subsequently, TOP Core Group Chairperson and President of International University of the Caribbean (IUC) Rev. Dr Roderick Hewitt delivered the keynote address, followed by two intensive days of working group discussions and presentations. Those present were dispersed into four groups based on TOP's four key areas of focus – Legacies of Slavery; Modern Day Slavery; Education for Liberation; and Transformative Ecumenism.

The concrete plans of TOP's four key areas discussed at the Core Group Meeting will be implemented after final approval by the Board of Directors meeting, which will be held in February 2023.

"Justice is imperative for unity, and it demands radical transformation. We need to create a vision for bringing transformation and building a future rooted in justice."

CWM finalises programme plan for 2023 following Board of Directors meeting in Singapore

CWM held its Board Meeting in Singapore on 10-11 November 2022, where its Board Members met in person. It was a fruitful time of discussion, where they deliberated on issues CWM is facing as well as the strategic programme plan for 2023-2025.

The event commenced with opening worship by CWM Moderator Rev. Lydia Neshangwe on 11 November at Village Hotel Katong, who preached from Acts 10 about how the Italian army general Cornelius presented a positive, edifying challenge to them as a devout, God-fearing man, and stressed disciplined, regular prayer in "total humility before God", recognising that the high-level work in policy and governance is "not our work, but God's work".

She prayed for God's wisdom and discernment, for them to enter the meetings pure in heart (Matthew 5:8), and that they would experience God in their decision making as they begin to make future plans and view ongoing work.

Subsequently, the CWM General Secretary Rev. Dr Jooseop Keum presented his report where he described key programmes and engagements with member churches and ecumenical partners in the past five months such as the launch of The Onesimus Project (TOP), and his participation in the 11th World Council of Churches (WCC) Assembly in Karlsruhe, Germany. As part of the GS' report, he shared his missiological reflection on the WCC Assembly theme "Christ's love moves the world to reconciliation and unity".

He highlighted that starting from God's mission leads to an ecclesiological approach 'from below', thus it is not the church that has a mission, but rather, the mission has a church. Through the presence and indwelling of the Holy Spirit, we receive the fullness of life that is God's gift for each of us and are initiated into mission as the movement of sharing God's love.

Rejecting the common belief of mission being limited to projects of expanding churches or charitable work supporting development projects from the Global North without relocating to the contexts, Dr Keum regarded this as an opportunity to rejuvenate the ecumenical movement, fundamentally rethinking "love", and how it can move the world to true reconciliation and unity.

In addition, he presented the Programme Plan for 2023 and Strategies for 2023– 2025 for discussion and approval by the Directors.

"Life-flourishing" is a key motif for CWM's mission and radical discipleship, and through this, CWM challenges and re-envisions oppressive systems of empire and confesses witness to life-flourishing communities – creation, church in action, education, economy, ecumenism, evangelism, societies, spiritualities, and growth and advancement.

Following a short discussion on the GS' report, Rev. Dr Setri Nyomi delivered the Programme Reference Group (PRG) presentation, where he affirmed that CWM can show leadership by bringing an authentic message to people on the values and power of God's reign; fostering an alternate public theology from the margins; and strengthening programme delivery.

Stating that PRG welcomed the reaffirmation of the strategic direction of CWM Programmes by the CWM General Secretary, he reaffirmed that CWM is poised towards the next era of making an impact under the theme *"Transforming Discipleship: Frontiers in Mission towards Life-Flourishing Communities".*

CWM Partners-in-Mission virtual gathering: Sharing mission stories & mutual encouragement

Around 20 Partners-in-Mission (PIMs), CWM Moderator Rev. Lydia Neshangwe and staff attended a virtual gathering on 24 November, which was a platform for the PIMs to share about their work, challenges, and joys to encourage one another and find renewed strength on their journeys as mission partners.

CWM Mission Secretary – Mission Programme & Partnership Rev. Julie Sim gave the Opening Prayer, followed by a message by the CWM General Secretary Rev. Dr Jooseop Keum where he expressed his heartfelt appreciation for their "passionate commitment, relentless efforts and selfless sacrifice" to serve God and the communities. He affirmed that PIMs embody the key missional identity of CWM in sharing their spiritual gifts and missional solidarity and contributing to fulfilling missional needs of CWM member churches and ecumenical partners.

Expressing that the PIM programme is the longest-running CWM programme, Dr Sudipta Singh – Deputy General Secretary, Programmes delivered a succinct presentation to introduce CWM's new programmatic agenda, ongoing programmes, staffing and structure.

The next programme segment saw the PIMs contribute their stories and bond over common experiences, while finding opportunities of learning. Adaptation to cross-cultural differences was a familiar thread running through the sharing session where each PIM provided a window to their respective mission fields. The event offered them a safe space to share their reflections, and many spoke candidly about issues arising from their service. They delved into the lessons they learnt in their spiritual journeys and encouraged one another with testimonies of God's provision and faithfulness as they were welcomed by and served the needs of their receiving churches and congregations.

Subsequently, CWM Moderator Rev. Lydia Neshangwe recognised their obedience to God's call to serve in their mission fields – grassroots, churches, communities – and encouraged them to be strong and courageous as the Lord is with them (Deuteronomy 31:6). Affirming their importance as the "core business" of CWM, she said that they are continuing the key work of CWM's forebear London Missionary Society (LMS) in going forth to serve and bring in His people.

Finally, Rev. Sim, CWM Mission Secretary – Mission Programme & Partnership, & East Asia & South Asia regions, concluded the event with a prayer of blessing for the PIMs (Isaiah 52:7).

CWM appoints two new Mission Secretaries

CWM welcomed two new Mission Secretaries after the Board of Directors approved the appointments during their meeting on 10 – 11 November 2022. CWM General Secretary Rev. Dr Jooseop Keum is pleased to announce that Rev. Dr Graham McGeoch and Rev. Dr Amelia Koh-Butler are appointed as Mission Secretary – Discipleship and Dialogue, and Mission Secretary – Education and Empowerment respectively.

Rev. Dr Graham McGeoch was formerly Associate Professor with Faculdade Unida de Vitoria, Brazil and a consultant with UNIperiferias, a civil society university that focuses on the interests on majority of the population, specifically women, black people, and indigenous communities. The former Minister with Church of Scotland received a PhD in Theology & Religious Studies from University of Glasgow. He has vast experience in ecumenical, academic and ecclesiastical circles, having been a member of Executive and Central Committee of World Council of Churches (WCC) and engaged with churches across Africa, Europe and Latin America. In his new portfolio as **CWM Mission Secretary – Discipleship & Dialogue,** he will develop proposals and strategies for guiding member churches to engage in evangelism as transforming discipleship in addition to promoting interfaith solidarity.

Rev. Dr Amelia Koh-Butler is currently serving as Minister of the Eastwood Uniting Church, Uniting Church in Australia (UCA). She was a member of the World Methodist Council (WMC) Steering Committee and Convenor of the WMC Worship and Liturgy Committee. She received a Doctor of Missiology from Fuller Theological Seminary. Formerly the Director of UCA's ELM Centre (Education for Life and Ministry), she stands out with her unique involvement in the ecumenical and varied multi-cultural ministries. As **CWM Mission Secretary – Education & Empowerment,** she will be responsible for developing proposals and strategies for guiding member churches to prepare next-generation leaders to be transforming disciples and for scholarship programmes.

Rev. Dr McGeoch began his work on 1st January 2023 and Rev. Dr Koh-Butler will begin her work on 1st March 2023 respectively.

CWM & All Africa Conference of Churches formalise new Cooperation Framework for ecumenical partnership

Council for World Mission (CWM) and All Africa Conference of Churches (AACC) have established an agreement for a Framework of Cooperation (FoC) to further deepen ecumenical collaboration on several programmatic areas following its recent approval by the CWM Board.

Leaders of both organisations had identified three key areas of engagement – economic and social justice; creation care (climate justice) and capacity strengthening for CWM and AACC's member churches in mission, diakonia and leadership in a meeting last October, and the Framework serves to provide a structured method of partnership that facilitates strategic coordination and follow up on programmatic areas of intervention.

Leaders of both organisations had identified three key areas of engagement – economic and social justice; creation care (climate justice) and capacity strengthening.

The FoC will guide and provide collaboration processes and working relationships between CWM and AACC; and facilitate mobilisation, working with and strengthening capacities of the member churches and church leaders on the three thematic areas.

The two organisations will support each other's endeavours in their respective mission and mandate through programme initiation and implementation for the next five years.

On the economic and social justice front, this cooperation will enable the dissemination of AACC publications on public debt and corruption in Africa and the organising of a regional conference on confronting corruption, and illicit financial flows and unjust tax regimes in 2023. It also facilitates a consultation on social issues, especially on gender justice and empowering male champions for gender justice.

The arrangement articulates their backing of creation care (climate justice) initiatives by selected member churches, and their support for roundtable consultations for African Faith Actors Network for Climate Justice (AFAN-CJ) leading up to COP28, which will also see their participation through the organising of COP28 side events.

Finally, the framework allows for faculty support at Mindolo Ecumenical Foundation, to contribute to the area of formation in mission, ecumenism, diakonia and leadership in 2023, among others.

Speaking on this historic partnership agreement between CWM and AACC, CWM General Secretary Rev. Dr Jooseop Keum said, "Since the LMS times, we have mainly focussed our mission work on the Southern and Anglophone Africa region. Now, through our partnership with AACC, CWM will contribute to God's mission in Africa for the whole of the continent and peoples."

He noted, "More importantly we will make it work as credible evidence of transformative ecumenism in issues of ecological and economic justice and future ecumenical leadership formation. Indeed, this is a milestone achievement in the history of ecumenical partnership in CWM. We will rise together to life!"

AACC General Secretary, Rev. Dr. Fidon Mwombeki said, "AACC is so grateful to have this MoU with CWM. I wholeheartedly thank the Board for their decision to establish this partnership, which was long overdue. We know the strengths of CWM in global thematic engagement as witnesses of Jesus Christ. We look forward to work together for justice, peace, and prosperity of all human beings."

"We will make it work as credible evidence of transformative ecumenism in issues of ecological and economic justice and future ecumenical leadership formation. Indeed, this is a milestone achievement in the history of ecumenical partnership in CWM. We will rise together to life!"

CWM General Secretary delivers greetings at Black Theology of Liberation International Conference

CWM General Secretary Rev. Dr Jooseop Keum honoured the late Prof. Vuyani Vellem during his greetings to the Black Theology of Liberation International Conference at The School of Humanities in the College of Human Sciences at The University of South Africa (UNISA) on 15 November 2022.

In his speech, Dr Keum extolled him as a committed church leader who left a legacy of pursuing socio-economic justice for the poor and marginalised.

During the consultation themed *"Unthinking the West: The Continued Importance of Doing Black Theology of Liberation for Decolonial Times",* the CWM General Secretary paid tribute to Prof. Vellem as an "outstanding gift to the Church, academia, and the ecumenical movement", as well as "a champion for Black Liberation Theology (BLT)" and "a comrade in its struggle for socio-economic justice for the poor and oppressed."

A joint collaboration of CWM, UNISA and VukaniBantuTsohangBatho, the Conference sought to explore contemporary BLT issues and commemorate the life of Prof Vuyani Vellem, who contributed passionately to the life-giving, liberative and transformative mission agenda of the community of faith.

The CWM General Secretary spoke about Prof Vellem's firm conviction that it was critical for the direction of black liberation theology to de-link from the West, moving beyond critiquing Eurocentric content to pursuing a pluriverse where many worlds co-exist in dignity and peace. An inspiring theologian who contributed greatly to black consciousness and pedagogy, he often weaved indigenous concepts into his writing, rooted in a true understanding African experiences and ideas, he added.

In his speech, Dr Keum extolled him as a committed church leader who left a legacy of pursuing socio-economic justice for the poor and marginalized, and urged conference participants to carry on Prof Vuyani's vision and work of developing transformative ecumenism and seeking Asian-African solidarity through theological dialogue and movement.

Lastly, Dr Keum highlighted Prof Vellem's tremendous contributions to CWM's theological statement, as a CWM Director, and a member of the Programme Reference Group (PRG), and acknowledged James Cone, Kattie Cannon, Robina Winbush, who were trail blazers in the quest for justice and liberation of the oppressed.

Rev. Dr Sindiso Jele, CWM Mission Secretary – Social justice & Africa region, also presented a paper titled *"Not all foreigners – Mission from the Margins, in South Africa are gentiles: Missiological reflection on Afro-phobia"* at the event.

eDARE 2022: Reimagining liberation theologies

Release is at the heart of the Christian mission. We are called to work for release from the powers of sin. Release from the illusions that blind us from the least among us. Release from the temptations to lord over the world and our companions. Release from the fears that make us discriminate. Release from the powers that oppress humans, animals, other-kinds, and the world. Release from limiting our mission to only our community, only our kind, and only our race. And many other callings to release …

CWM eDARE 2022 drew attention to, and gave directions, on how to participate release as our calling and mission. The spectrum was wide, including learning from the least among us (e.g., Minjung, Dalits), naming our discriminations (Islamophobia, homophobia, Afrophobia), coming to terms with our diversities (in terms of gender, class, race, sexuality, context, privileges), and reimagining liberation theologies and liberation hermeneutics for the present and for the future.

The majority of the presentations were theological and hermeneutical in orientation, but several also brought insights from the fields of art, education, health, economics, literature, and from the daily lives of minoritized people in the market and at street corners.

In the course of the three-day webinars, it was obvious that release (let go, set free) is not enough. Our mission should also include working for re-lease, that is, so that people have a 'new lease' to life. It is not enough to work for liberation. We should also attend to the trauma that liberated people live with as a result of their oppression. Put another way, our mission includes working to provide ease for they who have been re-leased.

The spotlights, presentations, responses, and discussions at eDARE 2022 invite the weaving of the three elements of release, re-lease, and re(l)ease. It is in the interweaving of these elements, which continues even after the webinars ended, that 'rising to life' becomes more effective and more meaningful. Equally important, rising to life is required by all living beings, and by the earth as our home.

eDARE 2022 provided space for contributions from across the world: Africa, Asia, Americas, Europe, Caribbean, and Pasifika. We learned from one another, across the world. eDARE is therefore a testimony that the days when wisdom and mission come only from a few places has ended. There is wisdom in all (is)lands, across the world.

CWM Caribbean and Europe Regions' Gender Justice webinar

The Gender Justice Working Group of CWM, Europe and Caribbean regions organized a Zoom webinar on the theme *"Rising to Life with Jesus: Worship as Resistance"* on the 20th October 2022. The webinar (32 participants) included a fine tapestry of inclusively crafted pre-recorded worship and live conversations woven through the panel discussions. The worship and panel conversations of the webinar were shaped around Jeremiah 31:1-17. Karen Campbell, Secretary for Global and Intercultural Ministries with the United Reformed Church (URC) brilliantly moderated the webinar. The panellists included Dr Anna Perkins, former Dean of Studies and Lecturer at St Michael's Theological College, Jamaica, Rt Rev. Garth Minott, the Suffragan Bishop of Kingston, Rev Dr Janet Wootton, Former Congregational Minister and Rt Rev. Joy Abdul Mohan, Moderator of the Synod of Presbyterian Church of Trinidad and Tobago.

The panellists robustly explored how 'Rising to Life with Jesus' demands a critical connection between holiness and justice through the eyes and experiences of gender and racial injustices as critical pathways to authentic worship, proving a vital opportunity to celebrate God who sustains and gives strength and courage in the struggle for freedom and life in fullness. It was an opportunity for the participants to envision new ways of being and doing – where liturgy does become the 'work of the people' and embodies and signals full and flourishing life for all.

Participants expressed great appreciation for a thought-provoking, robust, constructive and inspiring webinar.

The contributors and attendees acknowledged that there are people in churches who are potentially being damaged and even excluded by the very acts of worship in which they are invited to participate, which goes beyond gender and ethnicity and also includes disability, sexuality and generation. The event also gave thought to what is being done to address the exclusion/demonising/alienation of marginalised peoples – locally or structurally – in traditional church spaces. The panel also contemplated the necessity to create liturgy & worship which offers a renewing and hope-filled space for the whole person who might come through the door – whoever they are, whatever their background, and whatever their story. The panel concluded by sharing the hopes that liturgy and worship can be and must reflect God's inclusive embrace and love for all.

Participants expressed great appreciation for a thought-provoking, robust, constructive and inspiring webinar.

CWM among ecumenical leaders who urged G20 to take action towards equitable economic system ahead of summit

CWM General Secretary Rev. Dr Jooseop Keum joined ecumenical partners in urging G20 leaders to take action towards "an economy of life for the benefit of planet earth and all humankind" in a joint letter ahead of the G20 Summit on 15 November.

"Through the NIFEA* process, we seek an economic system that looks after the well-being of the most vulnerable, while bringing us back within planetary boundaries, protecting the diversity of life, and safeguarding the future of coming generations," stated the leaders of Council for World Mission (CWM), World Council of Churches (WCC), the World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC), Lutheran World Federation (LWF), and the World Methodist Council (WMC), which represent more than half a billion Christians across the world.

Environmentally unsustainable economic expansion is depleting the natural resources upon which poor people depend most for their livelihoods.

They had discerned three interconnected world catastrophes – **a major social crisis** stemming from rising inequalities due to racial and religious disparities; **a climate emergency** with rising sea levels and biodiversity loss that impacts vulnerable communities heavily; and **a broader economic crisis** that plunges low-income countries into further debt distress – during a meeting in Bali on 11-13 October. Additionally, **an alarming food crisis** with rising food prices led to increasing malnutrition and starvation.

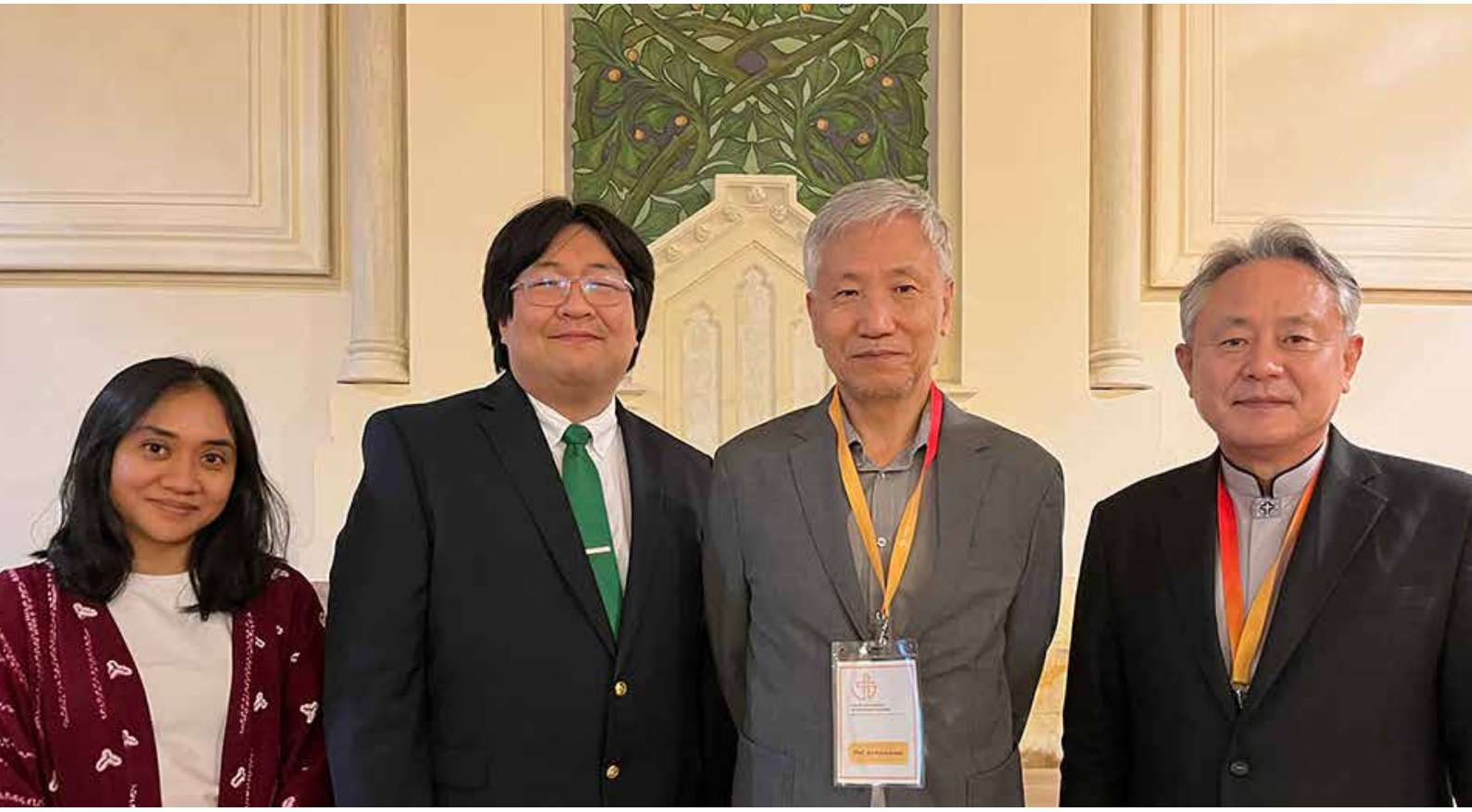
CWM Mission Secretary – Ecology & Economy, Rev. Damon Mkandawire said, "Environmentally unsustainable economic expansion is depleting the natural resources upon which poor people depend most for their livelihoods. Inequality will render the benefits of growth inaccessible to the poor, even as they bear the costs of this expansion through the impacts of a changing climate and environmental degradation. It's time for the G20 to act and listen to their voices."

To "recover together" and "recover stronger" from these intertwined crises as a global community, the joint letter offered a slew of measures such as **stronger curbs on financial speculation** on vital commodities, and **adequate social protection** for the socio-economically vulnerable and support to small farmers".

They also proposed fast-tracked investments in sustainable, community-based agricultural and renewable energy systems; moratorium on debt payment for low-income countries in debt distress; and a stronger global effort for systems of just taxation to fund social protection systems and the public investments needed to address the climate emergency.

***NIFEA, or New International Financial and Economic Architecture** is a collaborative ecumenical effort that brings together Council for World Mission (CWM), World Council of Churches, the World Communion of Reformed Churches, the Lutheran World Federation and the World Methodist Council.*

Symposium honours theology of Kim Yong-Bok



"Witnessing to a God of Life" was the theme for an ecumenical symposium paying tribute to the late Kim Yong-Bok."We invite you to engage with us in the ideas of the theology of life, which sees all life as interrelated. The World Communion of Reformed Churches owes a lot to these concepts, and we particularly want to pay tribute to the contributions of Kim Yong-Bok, without whom the WCRC would not be what it is today," said Hanns Lessing, acting general secretary as part of the Collegial General Secretariat.

Letizia Tomassone spoke on "Witnessing to a God of Life: A Protestant Engagement with the Papal Encyclical Laudato Si." She noted that while Protestant churches in Italy had been involved in environmental work for years, "the encyclical opened a new perspective in the ecumenical dialogue."

Jin Kwan Kwon, in his keynote address "From Social Biography to Zoegraphy: A Long Theological Journey of Dr. Kim Yong-Bok," provided a sweeping history of Minjung Theology, which developed the concept of a theology of life with reference to Korean Indigenous traditions.

"Life is lived in people in a wider web of life. For Kim Yong-Bok, the universe is first of all a communion of subjects, not a collection of objects or things. Yong-Bok views the universe as a mystery, the ultimate destination of all creation—the new heaven and the new earth, life together," he said.

He went on to explain that Kim Yong-Bok believed that "the subject does not abide in a particular being; the subject abides in the whole being of life, in the whole of creation. This is the power that must take on the power of global capitalism" that is destroying God's creation.

For Kim Yong-Bok, the universe is first of all a communion of subjects, not a collection of objects or things.

In his response to the keynote, "People as the Pivot of Missio Dei – A Religio-Social Horizon of Kim Yong-Bok's Minjung Hermeneutics," Lee Hong-Jung said, "Justice and equality are essential. All people should be treated as God is treated. Doing harm to others is doing harm to God. Missio Dei is a kairos event that happens in the ministry of the people."

Henry Kuo's response, "Remembering the God of Life for a World on Edge," argued that the voices of the marginalized "become an interruption that's prompted by the Holy Spirit, and that interruption should teach us the way to righteousness and witness in an increasingly unstable, fear-driven, and anxious world."

"Witnessing to a God of Life: Embracing Embodiment Theology" was Pauline Patricia's response to the keynote. "Witnessing to the God of life is a bodily experience. Our body is a shared body broken down by crucifixion. The wounded body of Jesus became a sign of the body of every wounded woman," she said, sharing her autobiography as a victim of sexual abuse as a child and how it compelled her journey toward dismantling patriarchy.

"Apart from theology providing a dialogical space, liberation theology compels us to do something, to be committed to a theology that transforms," said Philip Vinod Peacock, WCRC executive for justice and witness as part of the Collegial General Secretariat, in summary remarks at the conclusion of the symposium.

Held in conjunction with and at the Waldensian Faculty of Theology in Rome, Italy, the symposium, took place on 27 October.

It was the first of what will become an annual event to introduce important Reformed thoughts into the ecumenical discussion in Rome, Italy.

It is anticipated that the presentations made at the symposium will be collectively printed in either a special booklet or in Reformed World, the theological journal of the WCRC.

Jin Kwan Kwon is a professor at the Anglican University (Seoul). Letizia Tomassone is a member of the Waldensian Faculty of Theology. Lee Hong-Jung is general secretary of the National Council of Churches in Korea. Henry Kuo is a professor at Greensboro College (North Carolina, USA). Pauline Patricia is from the Protestant Church in West Indonesia.

"Justice and equality are essential. All people should be treated as God is treated. Doing harm to others is doing harm to God. Missio Dei is a kairos event that happens in the ministry of the people."

This article first appeared in http://wcrc.ch/news/symposium-honors-theology-of-kim-yong-bok.
Reproduced with permission.

16 Days of Activism to end gender-based violence opens with roundtable on building capacity of faith communities

(LWI) - The urgent task of equipping church leaders and capacity building of faith communities on "Overcoming challenges to end violence against women and girls ecumenically" was addressed in a webinar on 24 November 2022. Jointly organised by the Council for World Mission (CWM), the Lutheran World Federation (LWF), and the World Council of Churches (WCC) and supported by the All Africa Conference of Churches (AACC), it marked the start of the annual 16 Days of Activism to end gender-based violence (GBV) which began on the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, 25 November, and ended on Human Rights Day, 10 December.

CWM Mission Secretary – Social Justice & Africa Region Rev. Dr Sindiso Jele said, "CWM Africa has been participating in the UN-initiated 16 days of Activism campaign for several years. The initiative is superb but this year, the communities of faith need to go beyond baptising the programme to focus on the power of partnerships between the ecumenical partners to give visibility to the global campaign," referring to this year's campaign theme *'UNITE: Activism to end violence against women and girls'.*

A highlight of the roundtable was the keynote address by Bishop Purity Nomthandazo Malinga of the Methodist Church in Southern Africa, who brought up the recent commemoration of The International Men's Day on 19th November, a day that celebrates male role models and the positive value men bring to the world, their families and communities, and raises awareness of men's well-being.

"One might ask the question that in a patriarchal world, what help do men and boys need? In the South African context, men suffer homicidal violence, at the hands of other men. The quest for alternative forms of masculinities that are life-giving is an endeavour that is enriching for all of humanity," said the Bishop.
Prof Lilian Siwila from KwaZulu Natal added that the roadblock in achieving Positive and transformative masculinities is misleading theologies, and called for "an informed and transformative theology".

Organizers of the ecumenical dialogue which marked the start of the 16-Day campaign

Dismantle patriarchal culture and traditions

Among the panelists discussing concrete ways of changing attitudes within the churches was Rev. Bafana Khumalo, executive director and co-founder of the South Africa-based Sonke Gender Justice network and former member of South Africa's National Commission for Gender Equality, who noted, "As long as we continue to embed the understanding of men as the head, the church will continue to be a patriarchal institution, creating an environment where abuse can thrive. We can only become allies in the struggle to combat this problem when we follow the example of Jesus in the gospels who breaks with tradition and culture to stand for the truth that everyone must be treated as equals, made in the image of God."

Echoing Khumalo's appeal for change in the churches was Daniela Gennrich, a lay canon in the Anglican diocese of Natal and coordinator for South Africa's We Will Speak Out coalition. A survivor of gender-based violence herself, she works to equip faith communities to prevent and support survivors and is a member of the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians.

Adapted from https://www.lutheranworld.org/news/harnessing-ecumenical-networks-end-gender-based-violence

Poem

by Ayanda Mitchel Jele

Thursdays in Black. Join the movement,
speak out and save a life.
This Thursday, I decided to share what I wrote
a few weeks back.

Allow me to share a story, one that has never been told to anyone. A past I have concealed in the depths of my heart, a past I wish to forget, but the scars remind me daily of what transpired. A slap and apology turned into bone-crushing punches. Fists and kicks were my meal, they always came on time, and insults were my dessert. I screamed for help but that fueled him, neighbours turned a blind eye and asked each other, "what has she done this time?". After all, "*ezababili azingenwa*"

I sought advice from elderly women
but I cringe as their words echo "*Bekezela*",
" a woman holds the knife by the sharp end",
and "a woman doesn't expose her marital problems". And so I endured, living in fear and chanting apologies like a daily mantra the minute he came home,
I lived the life of a slave.

I distanced myself from everyone, I thought no one cared. That is what he wanted. I was weak and gullible. I lied that I'm sick so they could keep me away, while my happiness faded away in the hands of the man I loved. I felt ashamed and unworthy to be with people. While everyone enjoyed their life, I battled for mine in the hospital and lost another. I am empty, a shadow of who I was before.

I am now this timid woman, scared to show her face for fear of rejection and pain. I feel as if everyone sees my scars and can tell what I went through. I involuntarily jump at the mention of his name because of the fear he instilled in me. Life took a turn for the worst. I endured all in the name of love, for my children and fear of walking away.

As I try to heal, scars remain. Not those of love but they tell a story, a story of a survivor and a conqueror. One should not be scared to speak out for fear of being labelled as weak. Enduring doesn't give you strength
but breaks you.

Ayanda Mitchel Jele is Rev Dr Sindiso Jele's second daughter. This poem is reproduced with permission.

Applications open for Ecumenical School on Governance, Economics and Management (GEM) 2023

A group of up to 20 current and future church leaders will have the opportunity to attend the Ecumenical School on Governance, Economics and Management (GEM School) for an Economy of Life from 21 August to 1 September 2023, to be held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

Jointly initiated by Council for World Mission (CWM), World Council of Churches (WCC), World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC), Lutheran World Federation (LWF), and World Methodist Council, the GEM School responds to recommendations formulated for them in the Sao Paulo Statement: International Financial transformation for an Economy of Life and in the document Economy of Life for All Now: An Ecumenical Action Plan for a New International Financial and Economic Architecture (NIFEA).

GEM School seeks to develop churches' competencies in economics, and strengthen their voice on global economics, so as to address the issue of the Church's ethical and theological perspectives on the global economy having little impact on financial and economic policies, business practices and perspectives.

To do so, GEM School is aimed at building economic literacy in churches by equipping participants with the tools and languages to effectively advocate for urgent transformations in the global financial and economic sector.

Among candidates who meet the nomination criteria, participants will be selected with a view to achieving regional, gender, and denominational balance. The application deadline is on **24 February 2023**. Selected participants will be informed by 24 February 2023.

AFRICA

Uniting Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa (UPCSA) and United Congregational Church of Southern Africa (UCCSA) receive visit from CWM

CWM General Secretary Rev. Dr Jooseop Keum paid a visit to the Uniting Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa (UPCSA) and the United Congregational Church of Southern Africa (UCCSA) to express continuing partnership in mission and to discern together mission priorities in Southern Africa on 15 and 17 November 2022 following his participation in the Black Liberation Theology International Conference.

UCCSA and UPCSA have journeyed closely together with CWM over the years with mutual accompaniment and sharing of human, theological and financial resources. CWM Moderator Rev. Lydia Neshangwe has been elected as Moderator Designate of the UPCSA and UPCSA's General Secretary Rev. Dr Lungile Mpetsheni is Chair of the CWM Africa NPC. Similarly, UCCSA has actively participated in CWM's leadership and global witness, with Rev. Dr Des van der Water serving as a former CWM General Secretary. UCCSA's General Secretary Rev. Kudzani Ndebele serves the governance of CWM as a director. Both churches expressed their appreciation to CWM for the support of CWM's COVID-19 Gift of Grace to sustain mission and ministry of the churches during the pandemic.

The CWM General Secretary said: "The churches have experienced many challenges and difficulties caused by the pandemic. However, they are also witnessing her power of resilience in the Holy Spirit. The churches are rejuvenating missional activities and planning new mission programmes particularly targeting the vulnerable communities."

Dr Keum observed, "The churches are also not only recovering the attendees but also church growth both in quality and quantity, including accepting new synods in the central Africa region. Both churches have expressed their strong commitment to The Onesimus Project and other global programmes of the CWM. Lastly, the fellowship and collaboration between the two member churches was remarkable."

CWM Africa region also ran a programme of 16 days of activism against violence against women and children, to raise awareness about the rampant scourge of violence in the society.

In addition, the CWM General Secretary scouted a new property for the CWM Africa office with Mission Secretary for Social Justice Rev. Dr Sindiso Jele, Rev. Ndebele and Rev. Mpetsheni. In the new programmatic structure, there will be three strategic locations of CWM programme operations: Singapore, London and Johannesburg.

United Church of Zambia (UCZ) launches Child Protection & Safeguarding Policy

The United Church of Zambia (UCZ) launched the Child Protection Safeguarding Policy at UCZ St Paul's congregation in Lusaka during the Candlelight church service to commemorate the 16 days of activism against Gender Based Violence (GBV) last November.

During the launch, UCZ Synod Community Development and Social Justice Secretary Deaconess Mable Sichali spoke about the need for stakeholders to come on board and support the Church in creating a conducive environment and safe spaces for children at home, school and church to grow and flourish.

UCZ St Paul's Congregation Minister in Charge Rev. Chayana Nkonde said the policy document reflects the Church's desire for love and care towards children, while Lusaka Presbytery Bishop Dr. Rev Lordwell Siame delivered the homily message, where he reminded GBV victims to report perpetrators to relevant authorities.

EAST ASIA

Former Presbyterian Church of Korea (PCK) General Secretary visits CWM with symbolic cross from 2016 Jeju Assembly

Former General Secretary of Presbyterian Church of Korea (PCK) Rev. Changbae Byun and Rev. Hyun-shin Joo has visited the CWM office in Singapore to present a symbolic cross following CWM's previous General Assembly in Jeju Island, Korea in 2016, ahead of the CWM General Assembly in 2024.

Rev. Byun, a former CWM Director, spoke about how the cross - made of volcanic stone in Jeju, displayed on a stand made of cedar wood from a natural monument – represents an Assembly 2016 sub-theme "Healing the Broken Body, Hope for Renewal", to be passed on to the next CWM General Assembly.

"This cross also embodies the suffering of those who perished in the Jeju Uprising and Massacre in 3 April 1948 due to conflict of ideology," said Rev. Byun.

CWM General Secretary Rev. Dr Jooseop Keum said, "We received the cross from 2016 with appreciation, as a sign of the missional pilgrimage from our last Assembly in Jeju to our next Assembly, which will be held physically in 2024."

PCK Leaders visit CWM to Strengthen Partnership

As part of strengthening their ecumenical partnership with various churches in Asia, the leadership of the PCK, including the Rev. Dr Soon Chang LEE, the Moderator, Rev. Bohyun KIM, the General Secretary, Rev. Hoon JUNG, Stated Clerk, and Rev. Prof. Young Sang Roh, Director of the PCK Research Centre paid a visit to the CWM office in Singapore on 24 October 2022, as part of starting their ecumenical pilgrimage with the CWM.

Rev. Dr Jooseop Keum, CWM General Secretary, cordially welcomed the PCK leadership and thanked them for visiting the CWM office as a sign of valuing their partnership in mission. The leadership meeting between the CWM and the PCK facilitated various productive discussions and opportunities to engage the common witness and partnership in future.

Underlining that this is his first visit after being elected as the Moderator of the PCK, Rev. Dr LEE expressed his thanks to CWM. Remembering the early Christian history in Korea, he acknowledged that the London Missionary Society (LMS) was instrumental in bringing the Gospel to Korea. He expressed his special thanks to CWM for relentlessly accompanying the PCK in its missional endeavours. He also introduced the vision of the PCK for the coming "Decade Pilgrimage for the Life-flourishing Culture and Ministry." After his greetings, the Moderator presented a specially made ceramic Holy Communion ware set for the use of CWM staff whenever they gather for the eucharist.

Rev. Julie Sim, Mission Secretary for Mission Programme and Partnership, presented an overview of the CWM's Vision, Values, and programmatic structure, particularly emphasising the new strategy framework. She also thanked the PCK for accompanying the CWM in various programmatic deliveries, especially in the East Asia region. The PCK delegation acknowledged how similar the long-term vision and strategy of both CWM and PCK are in promoting "Life-flourishing Communities" in the midst of life-threatening forces. They also felt that it is an indication that we face common challenges across the globe, which calls for missional action together.

The PCK General Secretary, Rev. Bohyun KIM, also thanked the CWM and expressed his willingness to collaborate with the CWM in various missional programmes. He proposed that the PCK could collaborate with the CWM and its partners in the Agape Hospital project in Myanmar, contributing to the Training in Mission (TIM) programme and evaluating and contextually developing the Mission Support Programmes (MSP), etc.

After the meeting and discussion on various missional opportunities, the PCK moderator, Rev. Dr Lee was interviewed by. Dr Keum in the CWM broadcast studio, where he specifically spoke on the PCK vision for life-flourishing culture and ministry and issues of Korean peace and reconciliation.

Presbyterian Church in Myanmar (PCM)'s Agape Hospital Relocation Project

Delegates from the Presbyterian Church (USA), Presbyterian Church of Korea (PCK), the Presbyterian Church in the Republic of Korea (PROK), Japan Mission/Kobe Christian Hospital and Yodogawa Christian Hospital gathered for a working group meeting organised by CWM on 13 December 2022 in Singapore to discuss the Agape Hospital Relocation Project in Myanmar.

Established by the Presbyterian Church in Myanmar (PCM), Agape Hospital's mission is to provide basic healthcare and make health services more accessible to the community in Chin State, which is under-served by medical facilities. On top of mobile clinics, it also provides scholarships to produce quality medical personnel. To date, over 10,000 out-patients, and over 1,000 inpatients have received healthcare from May to August this year, and it is now in need of a relocation due to the COVID-19 outbreak and the high demand for oxygen for COVID-19 patients.

This long-awaited project of PCM involves a 6-acre plot at the Children Development Centre compound allocated by the PCM General Assembly, and the re-location is necessary as the hospital faces space constraints at its current location. In addition, further development and upgrading of hospital staff through degree courses and internships is necessary, as well as the acquiring of new medical and hospital equipment. The construction of the new hospital will also require layout planning, blueprinting, and funding.

Speaking on the existing development and situation in Myanmar, PCM General Secretary Rev. Ramthanga said: "Since the outbreak of the pandemic and even when the military coup took place with confrontations and riots, the Agape Hospital has been very useful to the community. It has served in an outstanding manner, so I am very proud of having Agape Hospital for the church and community in such a difficult situation."

Agreeing and recognising the need for and potential of developing the existing Agape Hospital, Rev. Philip Woods, PC(USA) Associate Director for Global Strategy and Programme, who chaired the meeting, added: "Many of us who are Partners of PCM have visited the hospital in Tahan and are familiar with the site being proposed for the redevelopment and relocation. We decided to start working on developing this project by forming a consortium of partners particularly of the Asian Christian Hospital Association who have the resources and expertise to accompany the PCM in this development."

Referring to it as "a life-saving project to overcome the catastrophic loss of tens of thousands lives during the pandemic due to the lack of healthcare and medical equipment in Northern Myanmar", CWM General Secretary Rev. Dr Jooseop Keum, said: "While the CWM family shared the grief of PCM and Tahan Theological College (TTC) for the tragic loss of their beloved leaders, we ought to respond to God's calling to be life-flourishing communities. Therefore, CWM takes initiative in partnership with the East Asian region, PCM partner Churches and ecumenical organisations to build a modern hospital in Tahan-Kalaymyo with one hundred beds."
The preliminary plan is to design the masterplan of the building in Phase 1 by August 2023, followed by fundraising among CWM's Asian member churches and Reformed Churches in Phase 2, before proceeding to the final phase.

"It is a feasible project because we have the experience of constructing the new campus of TTC which was a bigger project with the same partners. I would like to appeal to the CWM member churches, mission partners, and Christian hospitals to pray and support this project to save the lives of suffering people in Myanmar," Dr Keum added.

The subsequent meeting gathered PCM partners from the Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand (PCANZ), the Church of Scotland, the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan (PCT), the World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC), the Presbyterian Church of Ireland, and the Presbyterian World Mission of PC(USA) for further discussion and updates on their respective areas of collaboration and contribution. PCANZ General Secretary Rev. Phil King and Chair of the PCM Partners group summarised PCANZ's activities in Myanmar, and PCT delegate Dr Natalie Lin received the request to extend PCT's one-month hospital-related training to four to six months, among others.

SOUTH ASIA

Newly-ordained priests Rev. Mridula Baidya (left) and Rev. Suchitra Behera (right) with Rev. Julie Sim

First female priests in Church of Bangladesh ordained since 1997

Church of Bangladesh (COB) has ordained two women priests, Rev. Suchitra Behera and Rev. Mridula Baidya during an ordination service on 8 January 2023 at The Epiphany Cathedral, Oxford Mission, Barishal, Bangladesh. 600 people witnessed this historic occasion of women ordination, which last happened when Rev. Sudatta Baidya and Rev. Monorma Mitra were ordained in 1997.

The ordination programme on 7 January started with the traditional ritual of Turmeric Blessings, which is a purification ceremony for the ordinands since turmeric is a symbol of purification of the hearts and minds of the priest candidates. The next day, the 15 ordinands took the vow and were blessed by the Most Rev. Samuel Sunil Mankhin during the Holy Mass. After the service, the newly ordained Priests received a reception through different cultural programs of Dance, Song, Poem, and inspirational and congratulatory speeches.

CWM Mission Secretary Rev. Julie Sim said: "True unity of the Church can only be fully realized in a context where the call of God to women to exercise their gifts in the ministry of the Word and Sacraments is recognised."

The ceremony was attended by parents, spouses, children and relatives of the 15 priest candidates, COB Bishops, priests, leaders of the different denomination, Rev. Sim, and Br. Erick. Rev. Behera will be the assistant priest to support her husband Bishop Pholia's diocesan work at the Barishal Diocese at Epiphany Cathedral, and Rev. Mridula Baidya will be the assistant priest to her husband Rev Monindro Baidya, who is the Dean of the Khulna Deanery.

EUROPE

Protestant Church in the Netherlands (PKN)'s Easter outreach campaign to those imprisoned

Every year, prisoners in the Netherlands and Dutch people imprisoned abroad are sent an encouraging Easter greeting card, as part of PKN's Easter greetings campaign. The Lent campaign organised by PKN and Kerk in Actie allows for Protestant congregations throughout Netherlands to organise for tens of thousands of Easter cards to be bought, written and sent.

This year, detainees in the women's prison in Nieuwersluis designed the cover image of the card during meetings in an invaluable pastoral workshop led by justice chaplain Harma Zuidersma, who said: "Detainees are often not lucky in life. By talking together, they come into contact - sometimes for the first time in their lives - with connection, safety and personal attention. That is why the community within the walls is so important."

For more information, please visit https://protestantsekerk.nl/thema/paasgroetenactie/

United Reformed Church (URC) runs food parcel distribution service for hospital staff

As part of a Church Related Community Work (CRCW) project, Ashbourne Road Church and Mackworth United Reformed Church (URC) are helping Royal Derby Hospital start a food parcel distribution service for National Health Service (NHS) staff struggling with the cost of living. The food parcels will contain staple food items to last three days, and Derby Food 4 Thought Alliance, a food poverty charity which supports 11 foodbanks in the area, will also be offering follow-up advice and support to the NHS staff who request parcels.

VIEWPOINTS

FOLLOWING JESUS IN GOD'S BEAUTIFUL AND BROKEN WORLD TODAY

by Dr. Cynthia Moe-Lobeda

What an amazing gift: to be called by God to follow Jesus at this point in human history. Never before has the world so needed the followers of Jesus to be true disciples. What do I mean? Let us begin by recalling who we are because of who God is.

Who We Are because of Who God is

Christians hold that we are at one time three things: beloved, broken by sin, and body of Christ's love on Earth.

Beloved

Nothing is surer, no truth stronger than this breath-taking claim of Christian faith -- that God loves this world and each of us with a love more powerful than death or any other force in heaven or earth, a love that will never cease or diminish. You are beloved beyond measure. You need not spend your life earning love, because you have it! Nothing that you do or fail to do will block God's love for you. As we learn from the Apostle Paul, nothing "will be able to separate us from the love of God in Jesus Christ" (Rom 8:39). Let that promise flood over you, fill every cell of your body, embrace you.

This truth was emblazoned on my soul long ago when my mother was killed very brutally by three young men who broke into our home. The men were soon found. I recall vividly knowing with my entire being that they too were as loved by God as were my mother and I, and that nothing could separate them from God's love. My point in sharing this piece of my life is this: All people are beloved, forever beloved. "Nothing" – even culpability in murder – can deter God's love for us. Moreover, this love is for the entirety of creation! "God so loved the world," not only its human creatures. And, God's love, as seen in Jesus and through the Bible, is seeking "fullness of life" (John 10:10) for all. Therefore, God's love counters what thwarts that fullness of life. For this reason, as we learn from scripture, God's love is liberating and healing from all forces – including political and economic forces -- that get in the way of life in fullness for all.

This is the first dimension of who we are: beloved.

Broken by Sin

The second is this: We are broken by sin. That includes both the personal sin of individuals and structural sin. Structural sin is the sin wrought by social systems that betray God's will that all should have life in its fullness. Racism, casteism, sexism, and economic injustice are examples of structural sin. The global economic order that brutally exploits and oppresses some people in order to accumulate wealth or power for other people is a vivid example of structural sin. So too are economic practices and policies that lead to climate change and other grave ecological harm. Many religious leaders now refer to the practices and policies that contribute to climate change as "climate sin."

Yet this God, in love for the world, has come into it in the form of a dark-skinned first-century Palestinian Jew named Jesus. In this Jesus, God has forgiven our sin, has saved us to live in accord with God's liberating healing love, and has shown us the paths for doing so.

Body of Christ's Love on Earth

The third dimension of who we are is astounding. While broken by the pernicious presence of sin – including structural sin – we are at the same time, the opposite! We are Body of God's love on Earth. You bear among you and within you a creating, healing,

liberating love more powerful than any force in heaven or Earth, a love that is at work within and beyond us and that will gain fullness of life for all.

Let us take a closer look: The God we know in Jesus is not a distant being set above the world. To the contrary, this God, we learn in scripture, is at work in the world, breathing life into it. God's Spirit is present within, among, and beyond us. We human creatures are created and called to recognize God's gracious and indomitable love, receive it, rejoice in it, and trust it. Then, after receiving and trusting God's love we are to embody it in the world by loving as God loves. We are beckoned to join with God's Spirit of justice-making Earth-honouring Love in its steadfast commitment to liberate and heal from all forces of oppression and destruction.

Jesus is clear about this human vocation: To love God and to love neighbour as self (Matthew 22:38-39). According to him, this is our life's work. We are called and given this reason for being. This is NOT to win God's love because that is a free gift. And, we never will love perfectly; to the contrary we are, in Martin Luther's words, God's "RUSTY tools," utterly fallible and finite in our love.

This dimension of who we are compels people of God to ask, "What, then, does it mean to love neighbour as a BIBLICAL calling?" Let us explore further!

The Gift of Neighbour-love

That the church is called to neighbour-love is simple enough to say. BUT what is meant by this tiny and wild word is not. Two millennia of Christians and the Hebrew people before them have sought to understand and heed this calling: "to love the Lord your God" (Deut. 6:5)," and "to love your neighbour as yourself" (Lev. 19:18). "Our responsibility as Christians," Martin Luther King, Jr. declared, "is to discover the meaning of this command and seek passionately to live it out in our daily lives."[1] What then does it mean for us, followers of Jesus in the first decades of the 21st century who are seeking to be faithful in the midst of the profound challenges of our time?

We are to learn what neighbour-love is and does from Jesus and from his own Bible, what Christians today call the Old Testament or the First Testament. We know that Jesus' radical love emerged in the context of an oppressive, exploitative imperial power, the Roman empire. Jesus and his people, the Jews of Palestine, were colonized by that empire. In that context, Jesus lived a form of radical love that sought to build a beloved community in which the oppressed were freed from oppression, poverty was no more, and those who were blind to the injustices around them could see (Luke 4: 18). Moreover, according to Jesus' proclamation of the "year of the Lord's favour" or the "Jubilee year," all debts were to be forgiven periodically and people restored to the lands that were theirs (Luke 4: 19).

We too live in the context of empire, particularly economic empire that exploits, marginalizes, and impoverishes many people around the globe in order to gain obscene levels of wealth for a few. Love in the biblical sense – in a context like this -- is a magnificent and world-shaking reality. The faint of heart beware! Note five characteristics of neighbour-love as a biblical calling.

1) The first pertains to "who is my neighbour." "My neighbour," in the biblical sense, is whomever my life touches or affects. Given the current realities of climate change and globalization which link everyone together, my "neighbour" is indeed global and includes anyone whose lives are connected by the systems in which we play parts. To illustrate: people in Sub-Saharan Africa who are devastated by droughts made fiercer by climate change are neighbours with people in Western Europe or the United States whose societies are causing climate change. People in one part of the world who buy products made in sweatshops half way around the globe are neighbours with the sweatshop workers.
2) Second, neighbour love does not mean primarily a feeling or affection. Rather it is a steadfast, enduring commitment to seek the good of whomever is loved.
3) Next, the biblical command of neighbour-love is constructed brilliantly to presuppose that self-love – caring for one's own well-being – is good! "You shall love your neighbour as yourself." This implies respecting oneself and having compassion for oneself.
4) We are called to love all that God loves. The God revealed in Jesus loves all of creation not only its human creatures. Therefore, we are to seek the flourishing of God's entire "garden" Earth!
5) Finally, where systemic injustice causes suffering, seeking the well-being or good of those who suffer--actively loving--entails challenging that injustice. Dietrich Bonhoeffer called this "putting a spoke in the wheel" of unjust power structures.[2] Friends, take a moment simply to let it sink in! Putting a spoke in the wheel of injustice? This includes recognizing economic injustice and climate injustice and seeking to dismantle them in the name of Jesus' love. In short, the call to neighbour-love includes the call to work for social justice and creation care.[3]

With this holy calling, the great love story with which we began becomes so much more complex. Love, it turns out, does NOT pertain only to the arena of interpersonal relationships and charitable deeds of mercy. It pertains also to seeking justice in the systems of which we are a part – economic systems, political systems, and more. This is an integral part of following Jesus.

Why is this? You may be asked this by your congregations and others who will question your commitment to social justice and creation-care as a part of discipleship! They may say, as some have said to me: "Friend, it is fine for you to work for economic justice or ecological justice, but in this church do not preach about it, or teach about it, or ask our members to join you." How are you to respond?
First, you might note that if the sin of economic injustice or ecological destruction is destroying, degrading, or brutalizing "neighbours" (or yourself), then alleviating their suffering includes challenging and seeking – with others -- to dismantle those systems.

Secondly, we follow a Jesus who declared "The Spirit of God …has sent me … to set free the oppressed (Luke 4:18). We follow one who was executed as a threat to imperial power because he lived a way of life that defied exploitation, oppression, and exclusion, and he called others to that way of life. This makes sense, given that Jesus was deeply rooted in his own scripture, what we call the Old Testament or First Testament. Jesus stands in the historical stream of the Hebrew prophets before him, upon whom he draws in his teaching. These prophets were some of history's sharpest critics of social injustice, especially exploitation and marginalization. Perhaps the prophet Micah says it best: "He has told you, o mortal, what is good: and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God" (Micah 6:8).

And thirdly, Christians claims that Christ's love seeks fullness of life for all. Therefore, as body of Christ's love on Earth, the church is to seek fullness of life for all. This includes building an economy of life instead of economies of exploitation, and it includes caring for creation and countering climate change. God calls us straight into this story, calls us to be players in this story of God's justice-seeking love manifest in Jesus.

In short, in our world today, like in Jesus' world, colonizing economic powers are building exorbitant wealth for a few at the cost of other's lives, land, or basic human rights. And climate change – fuelled by the fossil-fuel industry, industrial agriculture, and highly consumptive life-styles -- is ravaging lives around the globe and threatening the climate conditions necessary for life to flourish. These are manifestations of structural sin. As a body of Christ's love on Earth, loving neighbour and seeking fullness of life for all includes challenging those unjust systems and working toward more just, life-giving alternatives. The church calls these alternatives "economies of life." For those of us, like me, who benefit materially from structures of exploitation, this means repenting of our participation in structural sin, resisting those economic powers, and working for policies and practices that reduce the gap between rich and poor, counter climate change and other forms of ecological degradation, and build communities in which all may flourish. As Martin Luther declared, "The Word of God wherever it comes, comes to change and renew the world." The Word of God (the Logos) is, as we read in the book of John, the living Christ. As servants of that Word, we are to join it in changing and renewing the world.

In Christian Community – including the Council for World Mission (CWM)

Such discipleship would be impossible as solitary individuals. But thanks be to God, God does not call us to lives of justice-seeking earth-honouring neighbour-love as solitary individuals. No, we are called into this discipleship as parts of communities. Jesus did not send out his disciples alone. We are given Christian community, locally and globally. This is part of the beauty and blessing of being woven into the Council for World Mission (CWM). As members of that body – that part of Christ's body on Earth – you are fed with spiritual and practical sustenance for the journey of discipleship. Praise God for the gift of community in which to live out the gift of liberating healing neighbour-love in this beautiful and broken world that God so love

[1] Martin Luther King, Jr., "Strength to Love," A Testament of Hope: The Essential Writings and Speeches of M. L. King, Jr. (San Francisco: Harper, 1991), 48.

[2] Dietrich Bonhoeffer was one of the leaders of the Christians who opposed Hitler. He was imprisoned and hung to death by Hitler's regime because of his resistance to Hitler.

[3] Christian ethicist Daniel Maguire, in Moral Core of Judaism and Christianity: Reclaiming the Revolution (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993), affirms that: "In the main biblical perspective, love and justice are not opposites but coordinates, manifestations of the same affect . . . . The various words for justice and love in both the Hebrew and Greek scriptures are linguistically interlocking" (220).

Cynthia Moe-Lobeda is Professor of Ethics at Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary, Church Divinity School of the Pacific, and Graduate Theological Union in Berkeley. She is Founding Director of the PLTS Center for Climate Justice and Faith. Moe-Lobeda has lectured on six continents in matters of climate justice and climate racism, moral agency, economic justice, eco-feminist theology, and faith-based resistance to systemic oppression. Her book, Resisting Structural Evil: Love as Ecological-Economic Vocation, won the Nautilus Award for social justice. She is author or co-author of seven volumes, and her published articles and chapters number nearly 50.

ECONOMIC AND ECOLOGICAL JUSTICE IN THE CHURCH: A ZAMBIAN PERSPECTIVE

by Damon Mkandawire

We find ourselves at a time when we need a significant and credible theology of ecological and economic justice that is culturally relevant to Zambian communities. Developing such a theology could promote a purposeful ideological orientation for sustainable ecological and economic justice praxis.

The modern Eco-Justice movement has encouraged a profound shift toward science, technology, and policy to solve large problems. Yet, environmentalists are increasingly aware that our current climate crisis will require more than just solutions based on hard science: these efforts must be accompanied by a widespread and deep-rooted change in individual norms and behaviour. Framing environmental action as a moral necessity is particularly important considering that many national and international agreements on climate change have stalled. The problem of ecological and economic injustice can create a platform for collaboration among diverse people. Fighting for people to live in a healthy environment is a moral and civil rights issue. It is important to reconnect all communities to nature and provide them with good reasons to be engaged.

To this effect, the church is well-positioned to shape ecological and economic justice due to its influence over personal moral development. Zambia's majority is religious. John Mbiti shared this unitary view of the pervasive religiosity of African traditional society. He wrote that Africans were reputed to be "notoriously religious" and asserted that they deserve this reputation, for they had traditionally been, and still are, "deeply religious," lived in "a religious universe," and possessed "a religious ontology."[1] He claimed that "religion permeates all the departments of life [in African societies] so fully that it is not easy or possible always to isolate it."[2] Moreover, he added, "religion is the strongest element in traditional background and exerts probably the greatest influence upon the thinking and living of the people concerned."3 Africans, therefore, were religious beings: "it is this that makes Africans so religious: religion is in their whole system of being."[4]

Religion for an African and a Zambian in particular, therefore, has a mandate for environmental care, economic justice, and sustainability. In the case of the Christian faith, the church's mandate can be drawn from a biblical text in Genesis 2:15, where the human is charged to take care of the garden or, simply put, the environment in which he or she was living. Kuzipa Nalwamba shares a similar thought when she says, "we cannot underestimate the power of sermons preaching ecologically sensitive sermons … could make a difference and shape an ethos for earth keeping."[5]

The natural environment is the major domain and the source of livelihood for all human and non-human living things. It is from the environment that we get the fundamental prerequisite and essentials for life, such as air, water, food supplies, shelter, and clothing. Again, it is within the boundaries of the natural environment that we obtain medicinal supplies to treat the many sicknesses and diseases that have afflicted and plagued humankind over the years. The environment is also a source of employment in the sectors such as agriculture, forestry, mining, quarrying, and fishing. The extent to which proper attention is given to the environment will determine its sustainability.

Throughout history, most religions or traditions in Zambia have traditionally expressed some ethical concerns for the environment and its creatures. Greed and destructiveness toward creation are condemned by most religious traditions. This view is reflected in their historical teachings, even if they are not put into practice. Traditionally, various cultures have highlighted ecological and economic justice. Proverbs, folktales, myths, legends, taboos, and ritual practices in Africa and in Zambia in particular focus on preserving and conserving the natural environment. There are rules and regulations on farming, fishing, hunting, the felling of trees, and sanitation. Stringent adherence to these traditional orders goes a long way in preserving some rivers, lagoons, trees, fish, and many other aspects of creation. Those who abuse them are sanctioned.

However, with the rise of modern society, these concerns have been fading. With the influx and development of modern science, economic and political institutions have taken the place historically accorded to religion, and traditional religious attitudes toward nature have largely disappeared. Yet, in other sectors, some religious leaders in Africa have returned

to their origins to recover the pre-modern teachings to present them as religious environmental ethics. Perhaps it is time for the church in Zambia to join in the fight against environmental degradation. Jonathan Kangwa suggests that religion – in particular, Christianity – "plays a major role in shaping
people''s perceptions and attitudes. Especially the Bible as a sacred text may influence how people see the environment and the natural world."[6] The biblical mandate of the church for environmental care is to commit to the task of promoting a sound and healthy environment and to care for people, the poor, the marginalized, wildlife species, and plants. It links environmental concerns with social justice issues. The two purposes of this care are sustainable development and environmental integrity.

Ian Bradley, in his book God Is Green: *Christianity and the Environment,* opens chapter 5 with an interesting question: "Does Christianity offer distinctive insight into the proper relationship between human beings and the rest of creation?" He goes on to ask, "Do Christians indeed have a special contribution to make to the Green movement and the battle to preserve the natural environment from the many threats that are now facing it?"[7] To both these questions, the answer is a strong "yes." As part of the human race, Christians can do their part by consuming less energy, going in for organic gardening, recycling their waste, and embracing any other environmentally friendly practice to reduce their carbon footprint. In this essay, I argue that these individual lifestyle changes are just a first step. Christians must use their collective power as an organized church to bring about structural changes. Christians are thus called upon to live the change that they would want to see in this world.

Kuzipa Nalwamba says, "That absence of the Christian 'voice' in regard to the eco-crisis the nation [Zambia] faces can be attributed to the fact that Zambian Christianity still espouses biblical anthropology that regards human beings to be at the pinnacle of creation."[8]

The involvement of the church in addressing issues of ecological and economic justice is key. In many African countries, churches command a lot of respect in terms of the number of loyal adherents, regular meetings, moral leadership, and, at times, the financial capacity to help come up with mitigation measures. "On purely pragmatic and functional grounds, the role of the church in general and religion in particular, cannot be ignored in addressing issues such as poverty, HIV/AIDS, health care to the vulnerable, gender-based violence, food security or environmental sustainability."[9]

The church's call to service must be directed toward the life-affirming substance of all God's creation. Kuzipa Nalwamba and Teddy Sakupapa note that a damaged and exploited earth is an unjust world: it calls for the church's hope and action. Environmental degradation that has led to the suffering of creation itself, economic disparity, and climate-induced migrations of people and animals, among other effects, calls for a reassessment of the Christian community's self-understanding and ways of being. An over-spiritualized expression of the Christian faith that ignores the physical world of nature and the false dichotomy often drawn between the spiritual and the temporal stand radically challenged.

In radically challenging economic and ecological injustice, the church must realize that these problems of economic and ecological injustice are closely related; realistic solutions must tackle both simultaneously. This means the church must be ready to speak far beyond paper recycling and lead-free petrol and work toward a major shift in the balance of economic power between rich and poor nations. The church must play its prophetic role in speaking truth to power and be able to speak for and with the poor. The poor contribute less to the damaging of the earth, and so the richer nations should be held responsible. Who is better positioned to speak for and with the poor than the church?

Concluding thoughts

The church in Zambia is in a good position to bring about ecological and economic justice, owing to the fact that 96 percent of the population professes to be Christian. This is an opportunity for the churches, regardless of denomination, to instil the values and earth-keeping ethos in the masses that belong to the church. Behavioural change is assured when the church develops a theology that seeks to bring about justice. The church is a moral force with spiritual energy which can contribute to long-term solutions to our complex environmental issues. The ecological and economic problems must be dealt with, but not only because of the chilling prospects of environmental degradation on the horizon; the real motivation must be the quest for authentic world-wide solidarity inspired by the values of charity, justice, and the common good. Advocating for ecological and economic justice in this sense is a response to God's command to till and keep the land (see Gen. 2:15) that God has entrusted to humanity, and it must serve to reinforce the covenant between human beings and the environment – a covenant that should mirror God's creative love.

[1] John Mbiti, Concepts of God in Africa (London: SPCK, 1970).

[2] Ibid.

[3] Ibid.

[4] Ibid.

[5] Kuzipa Nalwamba, "'Spirited Bodies' as a Prerequisite for an Earth-keeping Ethos: A Juxtaposition of the First Creation Story of Genesis with Ubuntu Cosmogony," MA thesis, University of Pretoria, 2013, 194,https://repository.up.ac.za/bitstream/handle/2263/40334/Nalwamba_Spirited_2013.pdf?sequence=1

[6] Jonathan Kangwa, "In Search of Indigenous Knowledge Systems for Ecological Justice: A Gendered Ecological Reading of Genesis 1–3 in the Context of the Tonga People of Zambia, PhD diss., University of KwaZulu-Natal, 2014, 18–23,http://researchspace.ukzn.ac.za/xmlui/bitstream/handle/10413/12056/Kangwa_Jonathan_2014.pdf;sequence=1

[7] Ian Bradley, God Is Green: Christianity and the Environment (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1990), 90.

[8] Nalwamba, "'Spirited Bodies.'"

[9] Ibid.

[10] Ibid.

OVERVIEW OF LIFE-FLOURISHING CREATION AND ECONOMY

by Damon Mkandawire

The Council for World Mission (CWM) is operating under its new strategic framework for 2020 to 2029 "RISE TO LIFE, Confessing witness to life-flourishing communities." The strategic framework focuses on Life Flourishing Growth and Advancement, Life-Flourishing Societies, Life-Flourishing Spiritualities, Life-Flourishing Evangelism, Life-Flourishing Education, Life-Flourishing Church in Action, Life-Flourishing Ecumenism and Life Flourishing Creation, Life Flourishing Economy.

Brief background of Life Flourishing Creation and Economy

We are already in the grip of human-induced climate change, and its impact is catastrophic. Temperature increase, sea-level rise, shrinking ice coverage, and frequent extremes of weather lead to species extinction, food insecurity and land loss and threaten above all the vulnerable. The years 2015 to 2018 are the four warmest on record. The 19 hottest years ever documented have all occurred since 1998. And as we await the figures for 2022 and following, there are longer-term signs that earth's climate will worsen profoundly, affecting the sustainability of life, despite some efforts at environmental control. Our planet is now in the midst of its sixth mass extinction of plants and animals — the sixth wave of extinctions in the past half-billion years. All this is the product of a carbon-centred economy, which believes that even on a planet of finite proportions, profit and production should grow without limit. Industrialisation pollutes the earth and the seas. Devotion to a cheap consumer economy, results in low wages, cheap goods and the exploitation and impoverishment of the working class. This suggests that people and planet are entirely at the disposal of the rich and powerful. Commitment to economic and climate justice is required to inform the critique of the death-dealing force of empire.

The Missional Mandate of Life Flourishing Creation and Economy

The missional vocation of "rising to life and breaking out from Babylon" entails the commitment to become subversive disciples to dismantle the empires of death and destruction that thwart the flourishing of life. The distress of God's creation is the consequence of systems, ideologies, legacies, and practices that put profit over people and the planet. The fact that those who are least responsible for the crisis are forced to bear its gravest consequences exposes how interlocking systems of oppression such as racism, patriarchy, economic injustice, casteism, and ableism are intrinsically connected with the ecological crisis. Life-flourishing Creation is therefore the courage and creativity to heal and restore the people and the planet through planetary solidarity.

In the area of Life-Flourishing Creation, CWM's core missional agenda will enable churches to participate in creating Life-Flourishing communities, reflecting ecological integrity and climate justice. This is not a matter of environmental advocacy, but of faith in God, the Creator, and of stewardship and witness in faithfulness to the God of life. There is urgency to this work, which is part of the strategy framework for CWM in this next decade.

Under the "Life Flourishing Creation and Economy" programme area, CWM will further seek to inspire, train and develop disciples who will become advocates for a better world and a different way of living, who will go on to touch lives and keep the momentum going. CWM, through Life Flourishing Creation and Economy, envisions a community centred around relationships and respect for the environment rather than the relentless pursuit of profits and material wealth. We will also encourage Churches to embark on initiatives that centre on Ecojustice Witness.

CWM Life-flourishing Creation and Economy emphasizes that we cannot deal with issues of ecology without focusing on Economy. Therefore, Life Flourishing Economy is a subversive witness that defies the market forces which commodifies and annihilates life for profit. A sway of death is unleashed by transnational corporations through the colonisation of the land, water, forest, and atmosphere, and accumulation by dispossession. Neo-liberal capitalism is an idolatrous system that desecrates and destroys life. Breaking out from Babylon in a market-driven world requires the audacity to engage in insurrectionist witness to abolish neo-liberal capitalism and heal the world with an alternative economy of life. Life-flourishing economy is an economy that embodies the defiance against moneytheism and the celebration of abundant life.

The planet on which we live needs a new order of financial and economic governance. A neo-liberal model continues to dominate the global economy, with increasingly negative consequences – for example, socio-economic inequality and polarisation, ecological destruction, a culture of violence at all levels of society, insecurity of employment.

The NIFEA process, leading to the development of TEEL (Theological Education for an Economy of Life), is an example of an alternative economy of life, which will be necessary as a deliberate strategy for overcoming injustice. This is a matter of urgent faith confession and of action to live out the Accra Confession.

The Life Flourishing Creation and Economy will focus on the following programmes for the year 2023:

1. **Life-flourishing Eco-Discipleship Formation**
   Inspiring, equipping, and enabling members of the congregations to become disciples with the vocation to engage in the public witness of life-flourishing creation and economy
2. **Life-flourishing Alternatives**
   Life-flourishing creation and economy involves creative initiatives to develop alternative systems and communities that are just, egalitarian, sustainable, and democratic, drawing inspiration from alternatives such as degrowth, planetary ubuntu, buen vivir, eco swaraj, and agroecology.
3. **School of Intersectional Eco-theology and Ecojustice Witness**
   Life-flourishing creation and economy necessitates alternative theological explorations and ecojustice witness, analysing, theologizing, and engaging with ecological and economic injustice at the interface of race, class, gender, and caste.
4. **Ecological and Climate Debt and Reparations**
   The legacies of colonialism and its diverse avatars in history contributed to genocide and ecocide. Stolen land, dam(n)ed rivers, cash crops, pesticides, GM food are living legacies of colonialism. Life-flourishing creation and economy includes the campaign for ecological and climate reparations.
5. **Pastoral Care in the Context of Ecological and Economic Trauma**
   Ecological and economic injustices are traumatic experiences, and the Church has the pastoral responsibility to accompany the victims of ecological and economic injustice in their journey of trauma recovery and healing.
6. **New International Finance and Economic Architecture (NIFEA)**
   Building on the Sao Paolo Statement: International Financial Transformation for an Economy of Life, the initiative advocates for a global financial and economic system that links finance to the real economy; is founded on the principles of economic, social and climate justice; accounts for social and ecological tasks; and sets clear limits to greed.
7. **Theological Education for Economy of Life (TEEL)**
   Run a postgraduate program with Union Theological Seminary in the Philippines.

A POSTHUMAN DIVINE ECONOMY

by Parulihan Sipayung and Chammah J. Kaunda, Global Institute of Theology, Yonsei University

Global Coloniality

In *The Wretched of the Earth,* Frantz Fanon categorises 'the settler's and native's town as a metaphorical tool to comprehend systematic violence in global politics and economy. He also employs parts of the body as imaginative resistance. He argues, "The settler's town is a well-fed town, an easy-going town; its belly is always full of good things. […. By contrast] the native town is a hungry town, starved of bread, of meat, of shoes, of coal, of light." Fanonian has been described as a 'colonial body politic' in which "natives and their quarters function as trash heaps and sewers for society's waste, the end point of the economies of circulation."

Sarah Lincoln argues, "If Fanon is here describing the colonial body politic, complete with mouth, "belly," feet, skin, eyes, and knees, then the "native town" is surely its anus—or, more accurately still, its toilet." This is how the global economy is designed with surplus or analitised humanity. The best is on the global coloniality table, and the worst is on the margins. However, such systemic violence is not limited to humanity, it is an ecological evil. Globalisation has not only given rise to physical interconnectedness but also reconstructed the ancient connectedness of mutual care between humanity, earth, and God. Hence, with the globalised form of interconnectedness, we have seen the strengthening of chaotic political, economic and ecological systems.

Hence, one aspect of globalised interconnectivity reinforces and perpetuates global coloniality and entanglement of death.

The modern global capitalist economy is poisoning humans and the earth. It is a necro-economy or an economy of death with an ultimate end to accumulate profit at the expense of life. There is an escalation of worldwide inequalities, return of new and subtle forms of patriarchy and mechanistic dehumanisation, soft racism, soft authoritarian and illiberal democracies. This reflects a crisis of global capitalism that is as much global coloniality structural, over-accumulation, as it is political and technological hegemony of cataclysmic death. Abundant production by transnational companies driven by technologies of neo-colonisation is expected to gain more consumption. More consumption increases demand, thus, inevitably results in more exploration and exploitation. No wonder these moves are expanding from Earth to Mars. On another side, a trade war between the rich and the powerful countries continue to victimise the least and the poor. These phenomena are the characteristics of Capitalocene age. A capital-determined age that prioritises capital over humans and nature. This age considers humans and nature as a mere commodity for profit.

This unecological economic system has brought natural catastrophes. The UN predicts the global temperature will increase 1.5 C above the pre-industrial level in 2027. The poles of the earth are melting. The temperature is increasing. The sea levels are rising. Some creatures are about to become extinct. Floods, droughts, wild forest fires, deadly viruses, massive hurricanes, and many other climate disasters are inevitable. We need to rethink the way we live. We need to rediscover our way home.

Posthuman Divine Economy

We want to introduce the concept of Posthuman Divine Economy as a prophetic critique of globalised notions of interconnectedness, capitalocene or necro-economy, and ongoing analitisation of humanity and creation. Posthuman Divine Economy focuses on the theological imperative to keep the entire planetary community flourishing through reclaiming and rebuilding care ethics in creation. It is a life-giving economy where interconnectedness is measured and conceptualised through mutual care of creation and sharing of resources. Posthuman Divine Economy is God's economy which is the foundation of essential interconnections, interrelationships, and differences. It is the foundation of all economic systems. All human economic systems are derived from and must be accountable to Posthuman Divine Economy.

Posthuman Divine Economy sees the cosmic as a planetary community and every human action falls within the framework of life care - the redemptive principle. A community of inter-being that emphasises interconnectedness through radical care, unity, and harmony. Posthuman Divine Economy is a way to return to *Oikos.* An *Oikos* dignifies the Earth, life, and people over profit. The *Oikos* is where we can realise God in all and all in God. Human economic, ecological, and political systems are a primeval tool through which humanity witnesses God's *creatio continua.*

RE-CONNECTED PIM STORIES

Doing God's mission as a woman in Zambia and Jamaica

During her return home to Zambia for furlough, CWM Partner in Mission with the United Church in Jamaica and the Cayman Islands (UCJCI), **Rev. Dr Jane C. Kaluba,** delivered a presentation on "Doing God's mission as a woman in Zambia and Jamaica to a group of students from the United Church of Zambia Theological University. In this extract, she shares a few points of what was presented.

According to David Bosch, "...mission is, quite simply, the participation of Christians in the liberating mission of Jesus, wagering on a future that verifiable experience seems to belie. It is the good news of God's love incarnated in the witness of a community, for the sake of the world." Transforming mission is a mighty work, that deserves to be read by clergy and all who are thinking and planning in any area of the church's mission.

According to David Bosch, "...mission is, quite simply, the participation of Christians in the liberating mission of Jesus."

CWM is a worldwide partnership of Christian churches. It is a partnership and therefore needs to be understood in that way. The church should take charge and explain the value of this person being sent into ministry - not only the resources but also the benefits of what the other church will get once they join another church.

Novelist, Chimamanda Adichie, tells the story of how she found her authentic cultural voice and warns that if we hear only a single story about another person or country, we risk a critical misunderstanding. It is impossible to talk about the single story without talking about power. Like our economic and political worlds, stories too are defined by the principle of Insaka. How they are told, who tells them, when they're told, how many stories are told, are really dependent on power.

Power is the ability not just to tell the story of another person, but to make it the definitive story of that person. I've always felt that it is impossible to engage properly with a place or a person without engaging with all the stories of that place and that person. The consequence of the single story is this: It robs people of dignity. It makes our recognition of our equal humanity difficult. It emphasizes how we are different rather than how we are similar.

Concluding thoughts

- There needs to be an environment to support women in ministry - a policy to raise awareness among women about why theology is important.
- Ministers should be packaged well for ministry.
- Policies should be put in place before someone is sent abroad - What is the policy that the church has before sending someone into ministry? Who qualifies to go into ministry? People should apply and then be assessed, sat with and counselled about expectations and this policy should be put in place.

Chosen, Equipped and Committed: Impacting Generations

By Rev. Wezi M. Manda

My family and I came to Guyana from the United Church of Zambia (CUCZ) in October 2021. Being a young family and with so much involvement with the youths in the UCZ, we have continued to seek opportunities and connections with the young generation to enhance mission work. We have a proverb in Bemba (one of Zambia's local languages) **"Imiti ikula, e mpanga",** meaning small trees grow to be a forest. This proverb places emphasis on the need to appreciate the importance of the young adults in the society. Hence any church that wishes to remain active years from now needs to consider investing in the youth.

Guyana Congregational Union (GCU) has embarked on the theme, **GCU on the Move: Reflecting God's Image.** And in this movement, the young play a pivotal role as they appeal more to their peers than the older folks.

Chosen, Equipped and Committed: Impacting Generations is the focus for the Guyana Congregational Youths and Young Adults Movement (GYAM) in this period. So far two conferences have been called at national level with a view to revamp youth involvement in congregations by replicating similar programmes.

The Biblical Perspective

Choosing and equipping is for God: He doesn't call or choose the qualified, but he qualifies those he calls. He equips those he has chosen. He says you do not know how to speak. In Luke 12:11, 12 young adults are encouraged to acknowledge that it is God who has chosen them. As much as experience, background, or positions held may be important, God is looking for young adults who would depend upon the Holy Spirit for guidance. It is He (God) who after choosing the young (or old), even equips them.

The Young are included in God's Mission: He tells Jeremiah (in Chapter 1:5-8) never to think of himself to be young for God's mission and assures him of God's presence, guidance and protection.
In fact, even though Jeremiah complained of being young when he was around 17 years old at the time of his call, King Joash (Jehoash) was only Seven (7) years old when he became King (2 Chronicles 24:1). If only the young people in the church would make themselves available, reachable and teachable, then they will make so much difference and help in the Church's movement to becoming a missional church. It is time that young adults started preparing themselves to take part in the church leadership and activities.

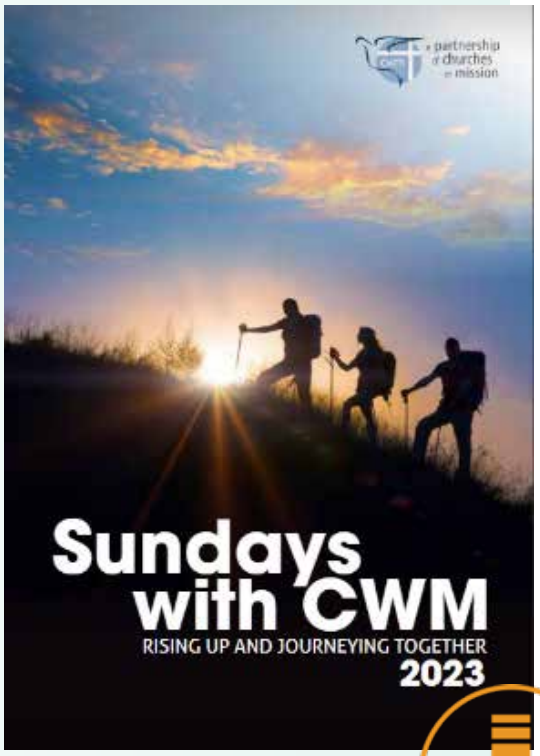
The Assignment is God's: Anyone that has been chosen by God, has a task to fulfill just like Jesus had one (Luke 4:18). Young people have been called into Christ's ministry to be partakers of what he was sent to do. Them too are a "chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light" (1 Peter 2:9). Christ is after young people who would declare or to witness for the resurrected Christ. Isaiah 61:4 summarizes it that "They will rebuild the ancient ruins and restore the places long devastated; they will renew the ruined cities that have been devastated for generations. It is indeed a time for renewal and rebuilding the church.

Concluding thoughts

Commitment is every young adult's role. The question is are young adults available? How committed are they? Isaiah says, here I am Lord, send me. What is the response of the GYAM today? Will they remain seated and complain about their church? It is time to rise up and be part of the movement AND NOT the Monument. For they are chosen, equipped and need to be committed to impact generations.

RISING UP AND JOURNEYING TOGETHER

Greetings of love and peace in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ from the Council for World Mission!



www.cwmission.org/resources/prayer-books/

I am glad to present the 2023 Sundays with CWM, a weekly devotional of the CWM. This devotional aims to provide spiritual accompaniment to all the readers—individuals, families, and congregations—and serve as a pastoral recourse to all those who seek inspiration from the stories of faith. This devotional also aims to provoke missional thinking through biblical and theological reflections on various challenges the global and local communities, including the creation, face.

The theme of this booklet, "Rising up and Journeying Together," is a prophetic call for all the readers to embark upon a missional journey in solidarity with the most vulnerable resisting the life-threatening forces and affirming life for all.

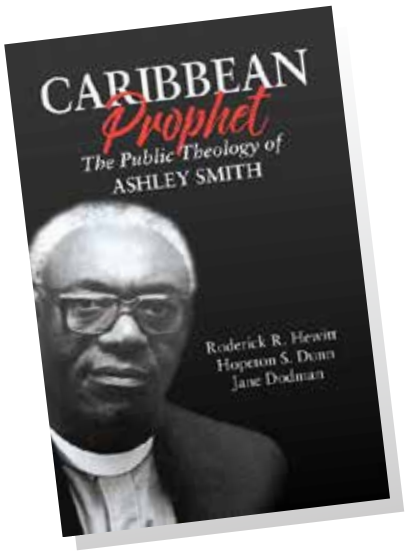
The world today is threatened by numerous forms of life-denying forces that exploit resources, oppress the poor and weak, and create divisions in societies causing wars and conflicts. In the midst of all these life-threatening forces, the scripture says that Jesus comes to give life in its abundance to all. "The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly" (John 10:10). As the disciples of Jesus, who came to give life, we need to proclaim this good news to everyone. The proclamation of such good news is that God affirms hope over despair, and life over death, transforming the lives of the poor, the oppressed, and the victimised. This proclamation requires us to not only rise up from the forces of enslavement, destruction and death but also to walk in solidarity with the vulnerable in a journey towards affirming the abundant life that Christ came to give us all. Therefore, we must commit ourselves to the mission of rising up and journeying together towards creating life-giving alternatives and fostering lifeflourishing communities in solidarity with others, life-flourishing creation in solidarity with the planet earth and life-flourishing economy in solidarity with the vulnerable.

As you take upon the journey and walk with many others in commitment, I pray that these weekly reflections may provide you with constant encouragement throughout the year to not only cling on to faith in God but also to put that faith into action.

May 2023 be a year of blessings and transformation for us all.

Jooseop Keum
General Secretary
Council for World Mission

TAKE A LOOK



Caribbean Prophet: The Public Theology of Ashley Smith

By Roderick Hewitt, Hopeton S. Dunn, Jane Dodman

The United Church of Jamaica and the Cayman Islands (UCJCI) minister and Reformed Jamaican theologian Ashley Smith's public theology drew on the experiences of African-Jamaicans to re-define their humanity and identity, with a focus on their resilience to build agency. This book is an exposition of Smith by leading scholars in Jamaica from different faith traditions, a pioneer who spoke truth to power, his contribution to Caribbean theology as an educator and scholar and his enduring legacy.

https://bit.ly/3XOXIW4 for details.

The Rights of Nature: A Global Movement - Feature Documentary

As pressures on ecosystems mount, this film takes viewers on a journey that explores a new legal concept and strategy known as "The Rights of Nature". Through constitutional reforms adopted in Ecuador that recognises nature as a legal entity, and partnerships between the Māori and New Zealand government that led to personhood status for rivers and forests, this film explores the inherent successes and challenges in these new legal structures that have the potential to maintain and restore ecosystems while achieving a balance between humans and nature.

http://bit.ly/3wzXTc0

Brave Blue World: Racing to Solve our Water Crisis

This film covers scientific and technological advancement and new innovations with the potential to solve the world's water crisis and build a future for sustainable water, such that the world's population has access to clean water and safe sanitation services. The documentary takes viewers across five continents to delve into new innovations such as reuse and energy generation.

https://bit.ly/40bOUeE

The melting ice of the Arctic (1/2)

Climate change is moving the Arctic into the focus of global politics, with access to mineral resources and new, shorter shipping routes opening up as the Arctic is likely to be ice-free in summer in a few decades. In the first of two episodes, this documentary allows viewers to experience the wonder of nature in the North and meet the people who have made the Arctic their home.

https://bit.ly/3JpMAKZ

ISBN 978-981-18-6596-1

Council for World Mission Ltd
114 Lavender Street,
#12-01, CT Hub 2,
Singapore 338729

T (65) 6887 3400 F (65) 6235 7760
E council@cwmission.org W www.cwmission.org

Company Limited by Guarantee
Registered in Singapore
Unique Entity Number 201206146Z