INSiGHT

March 2023

Mission from the Margins

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FOREWORD

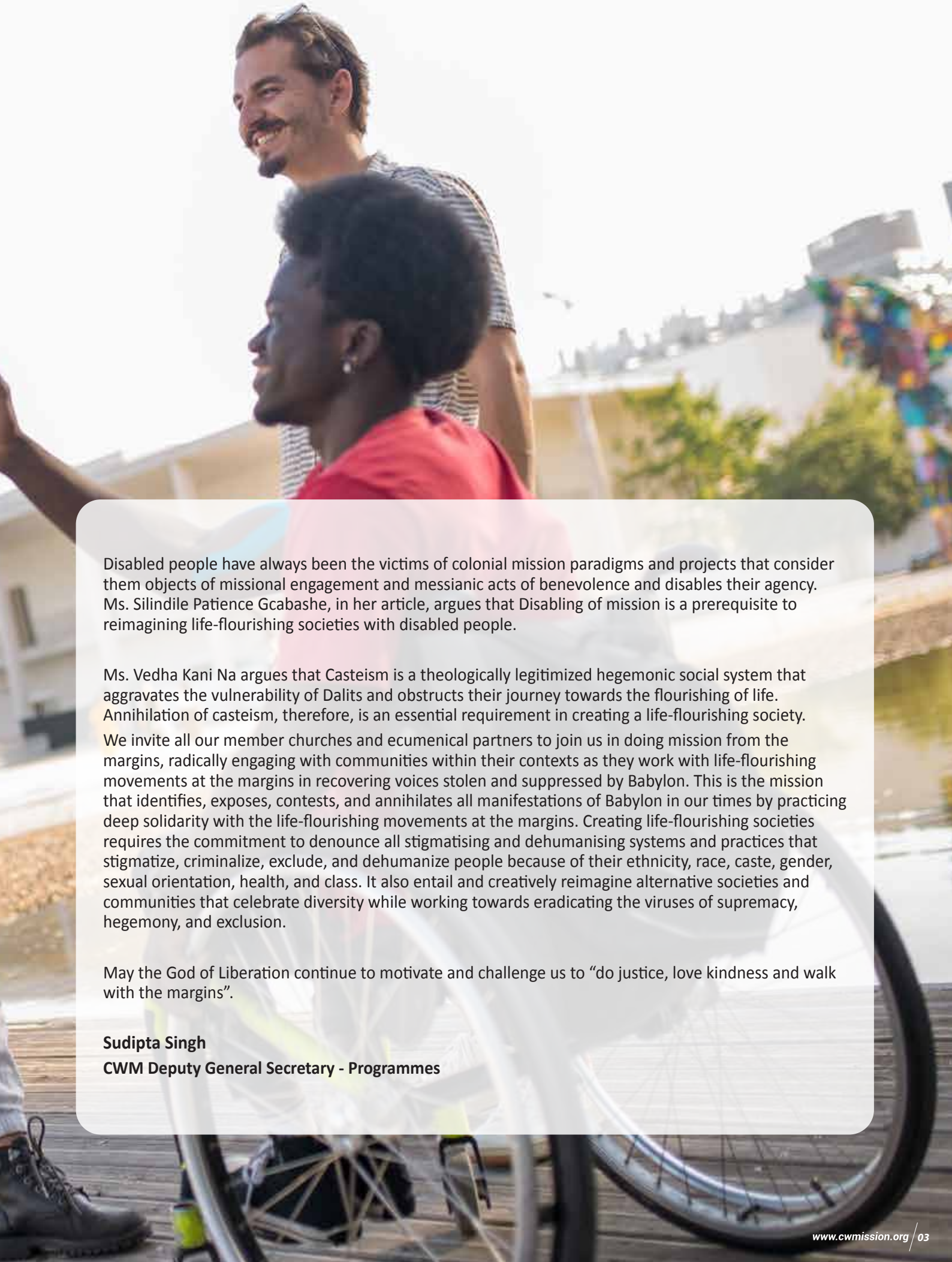
In recent years, there has been an increased emphasis on mission from the margins. This approach to mission recognizes the importance of centring the voices and experiences of those who have traditionally been excluded from power and privilege within the church and society. The phrase "mission from the margins" speaks directly to this reality, calling the world to a place of humility and reflection to attentively listen to voices and perspectives that are often excluded or overlooked. The emphasis on 'margins' recognises that within every given culture or society, there are often certain individuals or groups that frequently find themselves on the underside of a Global-Empire; excluded and prone to suffering while the world carries on at their expense.

CWM boldly argues that the margins have voices and proposes alternative theology that is rooted in the struggles of these communities. Through establishing networks, strengthening capacity and creating alliances of the afflicted, this programmatic area identified by CWM will not only serve to dismantle 'the mission model bequeathed to the contemporary church' but will also work towards founding 'alternative communities that bear witness to 'economic rule, justice-centered value systems, people-inspired political directions, permission-giving ethos for life in communities, and generosity of spirit in relationships'.

In the Viewpoints section of the March issue of INSiGHT, CWM Mission Secretary – Social Justice, Sindiso Jele, calls for a deeper theological engagement to decolonize mission and to develop a theology of public witness at the margins which should inform the work of CWM in creating life-flourishing societies.

Sexual abuse and violence is on the rise and our scripture, theology, and church traditions legitimize if not sanction its perpetuation. While we continue to transform our society into a safe sanctuary for all, it is important for us to accompany the survivors of sexual harm. Ms Belinda Crawford in her article discusses trauma and its impact on the individual.

FOREWORD



Disabled people have always been the victims of colonial mission paradigms and projects that consider them objects of missional engagement and messianic acts of benevolence and disables their agency. Ms. Silindile Patience Gcabashe, in her article, argues that Disabling of mission is a prerequisite to reimagining life-flourishing societies with disabled people.

Ms. Vedha Kani Na argues that Casteism is a theologically legitimized hegemonic social system that aggravates the vulnerability of Dalits and obstructs their journey towards the flourishing of life. Annihilation of casteism, therefore, is an essential requirement in creating a life-flourishing society.

We invite all our member churches and ecumenical partners to join us in doing mission from the margins, radically engaging with communities within their contexts as they work with life-flourishing movements at the margins in recovering voices stolen and suppressed by Babylon. This is the mission that identifies, exposes, contests, and annihilates all manifestations of Babylon in our times by practicing deep solidarity with the life-flourishing movements at the margins. Creating life-flourishing societies requires the commitment to denounce all stigmatising and dehumanising systems and practices that stigmatize, criminalize, exclude, and dehumanize people because of their ethnicity, race, caste, gender, sexual orientation, health, and class. It also entail and creatively reimagine alternative societies and communities that celebrate diversity while working towards eradicating the viruses of supremacy, hegemony, and exclusion.

May the God of Liberation continue to motivate and challenge us to “do justice, love kindness and walk with the margins”.

Sudipta Singh
CWM Deputy General Secretary - Programmes

AT A GLANCE

CWM re-envisions Life-Affirming Theological Education in Mission

"What are our visions for the future of theological education in mission in the face of permacrisis?" asked CWM General Secretary Rev. Dr Jooseop Keum during his welcome speech at the 2023 CWM Theological Education Consultation.

From January 24 to 27, thirty (30) delegates from theological institutions worldwide gathered at the Union Seminary (UTS), Philippines, to re-envision the direction of theological education in a post-pandemic world during the Consultation themed "Life-Affirming Theological Education in Mission".

Locating the timely nature of the Consultation, Dr Keum added: "We are gathered here as a network of alternative theological education institutes to pave a new way for theological formation by discerning the signs of times, resetting and revitalising theological education, and transforming and contextualising it to give deeper meaning to the communities at the grassroots."

Mindful that 2023 will mark the 50th anniversary of the Bangkok Conference on World Mission and Evangelism (CWME), the CWM General Secretary also noted its significance in advocating a "holistic approach to the theme 'Salvation Today'", with equal emphasis on both its spiritual and socio-political aspects.

Bearing in mind that the mission of the church “is to be present within the creative liberation movements of our time” (M.M Thomas), Dr Keum affirmed CWM’s commitment to “engaging with partners for such theological and missiological discernment and promoting life-affirming theological education in mission.”

In his keynote address, Dr Eleazar S. Fernandez, President of Union Theological Seminary focused on the future of theological education, which stimulated lively group discussions and constructive dialogue between the delegates and the speaker. Regarding the envisioning for theological education, he said: “The vision is a new tomorrow that is life-giving or that which promotes greater well-being or shared flourishing, and it is the mission of the church and its institutions to carry out this vision in their mission and ministry.”

The CWM Theological Education Consultation is also the context of the official launch of the Master of Theology in Theological Education for an Economy of Life (MTh TEEL) programme. This online degree is a response to the increasing demand by member churches to educate young theologians and church leaders on the shape, content, and practice of an inclusive, alternative, life-flourishing economy.

CWM marks launch of Theological Education for an Economy of Life (TEEL) Master of Theology Programme with dedication service

A dedication service was held to mark the official launch of the CWM's first Theological Education for an of Life (TEEL) Master of Theology programme on 26 January 2023 at the Union Theological Seminary (UTS), Philippines. Among those in attendance were the pioneer batch of students from various regions around the world, who took part in the dedication service via pre-recorded video.

During the service, CWM General Secretary Rev. Dr Jooseop Keum expressed profound thanks to UTS for their support to pilot and host the online Master of Theology (MTh) degree, which responds to an increasing need by CWM member churches to educate young theologians and church leaders to work towards an inclusive, alternative, life-flourishing economy.

> "This TEEL Curriculum has been developed with a view to equip our young people to be critical of the current economic systems and embraces an Economy of Life."

Dr Keum said: "CWM's TEEL Programme is forming part of CWM's efforts to fulfil its missional agenda as it works with member churches and ecumenical partners to create life-flourishing communities reflecting ecological integrity and climate justice."

"This TEEL Curriculum has been developed with a view to equip our young people to be critical of the current economic systems and embraces an Economy of Life. It is concerned about justice and seeks to build an economic order that respects human dignity, encourages solidarity and mutual accountability and serves the common good," Dr Keum added. He also encouraged the first batch of TEEL MTh students training to become ambassadors for economies of life, before presenting a memento to UTS President Dr Eleazar Fernandez.

> **" As a pilot for TEEL, I hope and pray that UTS will be able to embody well the vision of TEEL and share and inspire others to accept the challenge to share TEEL in their own context."**

"I am excited and grateful that CWM contacted and engaged with us, along with other religious leaders from other parts of the world on the topic of Economy of Life Curriculum," said Dr Fernadez in his speech.

"What we are going to launch today is a product of the work of many over a period of time. But this launch is only a moment in the journey of TEEL. As a pilot for TEEL, I hope and pray that UTS will be able to embody well the vision of TEEL and share and inspire others to accept the challenge to share TEEL in their own context," Dr Fernandez added.

TEEL arose from CWM's commitment to the Ecumenical Action Plan for a New International Financial and Economic Architecture (NIFEA), a process emerging from the Global Ecumenical Conference on a NIFEA organised by CWM, WCC, WCRC and LWF* in Brazil, 2012. After a series of preparatory meetings and developing tactical plans, the Theological Education Team on Economy of Life (TETEL) developed the TEEL curriculum, which aims to equip students to understand and critique the current economic system and to offer an alternative rooted in the economics of abundance and life.

The first batch of students of the TEEL Master of Theology (Mth) Programme was admitted and began their studies in November 2022.

** World Council of Churches (WCC), World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC) and Lutheran World Federation (LWF)*

CWM Theological Education Consultation
on Life-Affirming Theological Education in Mission

23-27 January 2023, Manila

Final Statement

We gathered for five days at Union Theological Seminary where we were blessed by the beauty of the campus, nourished by the abundant hospitality of the community, inspired by the rich spiritual life of the chapel, which deepened our engagement with the issues at stake, and challenged by the rigour of the discussions in the conference hall. A highlight of the event was the launch of the Theological Education for the Economy of Life (TEEL) programme, which provided a foundation on which to imagine further steps towards the development of life-affirming theological education.

Theological Education for Economy of Life (TEEL) as part of Life-Affirming Theological Education (LATEM)

Theological Education for Economy of Life (TEEL) is part of the Life-Affirming Theological Education (LATEM) process. This type of transformative education looks critically at past theological teachings and traditions, and discerns life-affirming theological understandings for the present and the future. It also enables the Church to engage with society, academic institutions, market, geopolitics and public sectors while empowering people of faith and goodwill with responsible theological world views and liberating praxes. It raises a question on how churches, pastors, teachers, missionaries, clergy and lay Christians, working with people of other faiths, can participate in God's mission and rise to life together and the whole creation especially at these times of crisis. Its methodological approach is that of engaging all to dialogue and to mutually share knowledge, reflection and action.

The TEEL curriculum, therefore, contributes appropriately to LATEM in terms of its three units which are:

1. Discerning the signs of the times and analysing the current system.
2. Exploring and engaging Alternatives to the economy of Death.
3. Rising to Life: Living out the new Heaven and Earth.

The provision of both TEEL and LATEM should be based on participatory methodologies where learners and facilitators exchange world views and praxis in a mutually reinforcing manner. Attempts are made to avoid the traditional teaching systems where learners are recipients and teachers are givers of knowledge.

The Consultation affirms that TEEL is part of LATEM that will include other issues including interrogating power, peace, politics, culture, digital revolution, gender justice, ecological justice, patriarchy, agism, casteism, ancient and contemporary slavery, migration, human trafficking, racism, violence, religious fundamentalism and other induced human crises.

Rationale for a Re-Set: Towards a Life-affirming Theological Education

However, certain trends and realities of today's world necessitate the need to expand the scope of our current efforts. With the neo-liberal economy as the ideological vision of our generation, creation and accumulation of wealth have become the decisive factors for all relationships at the levels of people, communities and countries. Abuse and exploitation of the vulnerable earth and human beings are its most obvious strategies as well as consequences. Religious resources and institutions seem to have become the high priests of this idolatry of mammon. In many parts of the world, religion seems to have become a powerful source of hatred, division and violence, and a barefaced defender of greed and injustice.

Furthermore, with unbridled technology continuing to harm earth's eco-system and dehumanize millions, the fate and future of the earth now seems to hang on the growing power of technology and the purposes for which it is used. The political fallout of these processes warns of the danger of oligarchies replacing democratic institutions. These hegemonic powers with their insatiable greed for wealth and power and their aggressive assertions of domination are writing the script for the future that offers no future for many. These global trends pose serious moral challenges that cannot be ignored by faith communities and institutions.

Hope is found among those who through actions of courage, dissenting voices, alternative discourses, collectives of resistance, counter-cultural expressions, and community actions, are challenging the dominant vision of the future. Inspiration comes from movements of marginalized communities – peasants, Indigenous peoples, racially oppressed people, Dalits, women, farmers, champions of environmental protection, and many others who resist political repression, militarization, and injustice.

This points to the reality that the world indeed is at a crossroads facing a sharp moral divide. It, therefore, seems to be a decisive moment – for churches, for all faith communities, and particularly for theological educators, to discern their role in shaping the emerging world. Will they allow themselves to be preoccupied with issues of survival, continuity, and the patronage of the powerful and wealthy? Or will they choose to be with the restless others who are clamouring for a new world? Can theological educators offer readings of the Bible that meet the challenges of our time? Can they equip church communities to resist idolatry and injustice, and to become communities of hope in a time of despair? Can they discern where the renewing Spirit of God is at work, perhaps in surprising places? Can they re-shape ministerial formation to serve the needs of the church today and tomorrow? To meet these challenges there is need to re-set theological education.

An Initial Agenda for the Re-setting of Theological Education

We have identified five issues that could form an initial agenda for an ongoing process of consultation and mutual challenge in relation to re-setting theological education:

1. Contextualization of theology, while a unifying commitment for the network, requires problematization, re-definition and re-imagination.
2. A life-affirming theological education needs to expose, interrogate and challenge death-dealing economic and political systems that threaten the human community and all life on earth.
3. A preferential option for justice needs to shape pedagogy so that such methods as immersion, solidarity, participation and co-learning are valued and practised.
4. Fresh thinking is needed as regards what students are expected to know, to be and to do; and forms of assessment need to be shaped accordingly.
5. Without sacrificing academic integrity and accountability, theological education needs to adopt "movement-mode" – ready to meet the high cost of being prophetic, revolutionary and transformative.

Recommendations for Next Steps

We recommend that:

1. Participating institutions explore how appropriate aspect(s) of the Theological Education for the Economy of Life (TEEL) programme can be integrated into their curriculum.
2. Institutions with a passion for life-affirming theological education that engages today's situation of crisis commit to an ongoing process of consultation convened by CWM, and sharing of ideas, people and resources, seeking to become an ever-expanding movement.
3. CWM investigate the possibility of hosting an online platform for the sharing of resources that will support the delivery of life-affirming theological education.
4. CWM prepare a proposal for an online PhD programme in mission studies which would be delivered by a network of committed institutions and educators, possibly supported by the creation of a permanent centre; and which would enable emerging scholars and leaders to complete in-depth studies of cutting-edge issues.

Conclusion

We depart from UTS to our home countries full of the spirit of collaboration, creativity and innovation where sharing of knowledge, experience, human and non-human resources to enhance the shaping of this Life- Affirming Theological Education will be the norm

CWM holds first Board of Directors' meeting of the year 2023

Council for World Mission (CWM) held a virtual Board Meeting on Zoom on 20-21 February 2023, gathering its Board Members and management staff for a time of discussion and deliberation on issues faced by CWM. The event commenced with an opening reflection and prayer by CWM Moderator Rev. Lydia Neshangwe at 6:00 P.M. SGT, where she spoke about loving God in a holistic manner (Deuteronomy 6:4 and Mark 12).

Elaborating on spiritual intelligence, Rev. Neshangwe said, "The gift of discernment that God gives us is what brings us to a place like this, and we are able to make decisions and reflect, all in God's name. Loving God with our minds means to let God use our mental or academic intelligence to articulate our values and vision."

This was followed by the CWM General Secretary Rev. Dr Jooseop Keum's report on key CWM programmes and engagements with member churches and ecumenical partners since the last Board Meeting in November 2022. As CWM begins to fulfil the missional agenda for the strategic period of 2020-2029, it has been engaging with its member churches and partners in confessing witness to life-flourishing communities through various initiatives.

As part of the GS' report, Dr Keum shared his theme reflection ahead of the CWM Assembly 2024, where he said that all six CWM regions should consider what God's mission is in today's wounded world, and how they can participate in it together as a global community and partnership of churches in mission. "How can we witness to God's life-affirming mission through our Assembly?" he asked.

With this year being the 50th anniversary of the Bangkok World Mission Conference, he suggested drawing lessons from what he dubbed "a hallmark of the history of mission" amid deep crisis, which advocated a "holistic approach to the theme 'Salvation Today'" in both its spiritual and socio-political aspects. In concluding his report, Dr Keum called on the Board to "collectively discern the will of God to lead this community of churches in mission towards rising to life".

Following his presentation, the Chairperson of Programme Reference Group (PRG) Rev. Dr Setri Nyomi delivered a brief PRG update, and the Chairperson of The Onesimus Project (TOP) Rev. Dr Roderick Hewitt shared TOP updates. Dr Hewitt outlined several priority areas such as establishing reparatory justice through educational exposure for psychological healing; building bridges of belonging between Africans in the diaspora and Africans in the continent; strengthening research and publication focused on restorative justice; and raising awareness among member churches of various forms of modern slavery.

On the second day, the Directors engaged in a plenary discussion deliberating on various topics and considerations of the assembly theme, as well as the reports presented. The Management will consider the theme, missiological reflection, and prepare a proposal. This proposal will be presented at the next Board of Directors Meeting in May 2023.

CWM Africa Members' Mission Forum (MMF): Building life-flourishing communities at the margins

Rev. Dr Fidon Mwombeki highlighted the need for teamwork with those around the world who are also combatting systemic injustice and modern-day slavery. In addition, he urged Africa to acknowledge its complicity in the slave trade, and upon self-reflection, to seek justice, restoration and reconciliation.

Council for World Mission (CWM) Member Mission Forum (MMF) for the Africa region was held based on the theme "Africa in the context of building the life flourishing societies: Face to face with the reality and brutalities of Babylon" on 25 February - 3 March 2023 in Nairobi. The event brought together church leaders from CWM Africa member churches to collectively discern and seek the will of God as He works in the margins of society.

The event commenced with a keynote address by the General Secretary of the All Africa Conference of Churches (AACC), Rev. Dr Fidon Mwombeki on "The other side of slave history: Untold stories and hidden truths". Calling for research to be conducted on slave trade from East Africa through the Indian Ocean to Arabic countries, he highlighted the need for teamwork with those around the world who are also combatting systemic injustice and modern-day slavery. In addition, he urged Africa to acknowledge its complicity in the slave trade, and upon self-reflection, to seek justice, restoration and reconciliation.

CWM General Secretary Rev. Dr Jooseop Keum brought greetings, where he recognised the multi-faceted challenges besieging Africa, which included social, economic, and political instability, community polarisations, military conflicts, as well as climate crises.

"Coming together as the representatives of the member churches to this MMF, it is very important that we reflect on our context and seek ways to equip and mutually challenge one another to do the mission of God in the light of our social, political and economic issues," said Dr Keum.

Against the backdrop of communities struggling to be 'church' again post-COVID-19 lockdowns, participants engaged in discussions on the concept and definition of reverting to the pre-COVID-19 normal, especially considering the predicament of people with disabilities, the poor, the survivors of gender injustices and racial discrimination.

Over several days, they engaged in discussions on the life-flourishing, post-pandemic normal they envision creating for these marginalised communities. As part of their exposure visit, participants visited Kibera, the largest slum in Africa, where they came face to face with the realities in the margins.

Delegates were able to relate the presentations and discussions to their specific situations, and place them within regional and global context.

Finally, the delegates affirmed that recognizing God's work in their respective communities, and joining Him as mission agents is essential.

Applications are open for Training in Mission (TIM) - Diploma in Mission Studies 2023

Could you be called to participate in Christian formation which contributes to a lifelong involvement in God's mission through the church?

Are you open to a wider vision, deeper commitment, and a stronger sense of teamwork and partnership with other Christians around the world, particularly through CWM member churches?

We invite you to apply for CWM's Training in Mission (TIM) – Diploma in Mission Studies Programme held from June to November 2023 in Fiji and Jamaica.

For over 40 years now, the TIM Programme has been part of CWM's efforts to equip young people for the ministry and mission of its member churches while enhancing the scope for the church's public witness. Among other initiatives, TIM empowers a new generation of leaders with a practical and radical understanding of what witnessing to Christ means.

TIM provides the opportunity for youths aged 18 to 30 years old, single and not yet ordained - to 6.5 months of intensive mission learning in theory and in practice through classes, exposure visits, projects and hands-on work in various contexts.

Participants who complete the assessment requirements of the TIM Programme will receive a Diploma in Mission Studies, a qualification which recognises its graduates' applied leadership skills in mission and education to enhance employment opportunities or to work in a voluntary capacity.

CWM's member churches and ecumenical partners benefit from the nurturing of qualified individuals with the knowledge and skills to successfully lead areas of responsibility in a wide range of Christian mission roles.

Please visit https://bit.ly/3FntSkB for the programme brief and application form or contact us at empowerment@cwmission.org
Closing date for the submission of applications is on 26th April 2023.

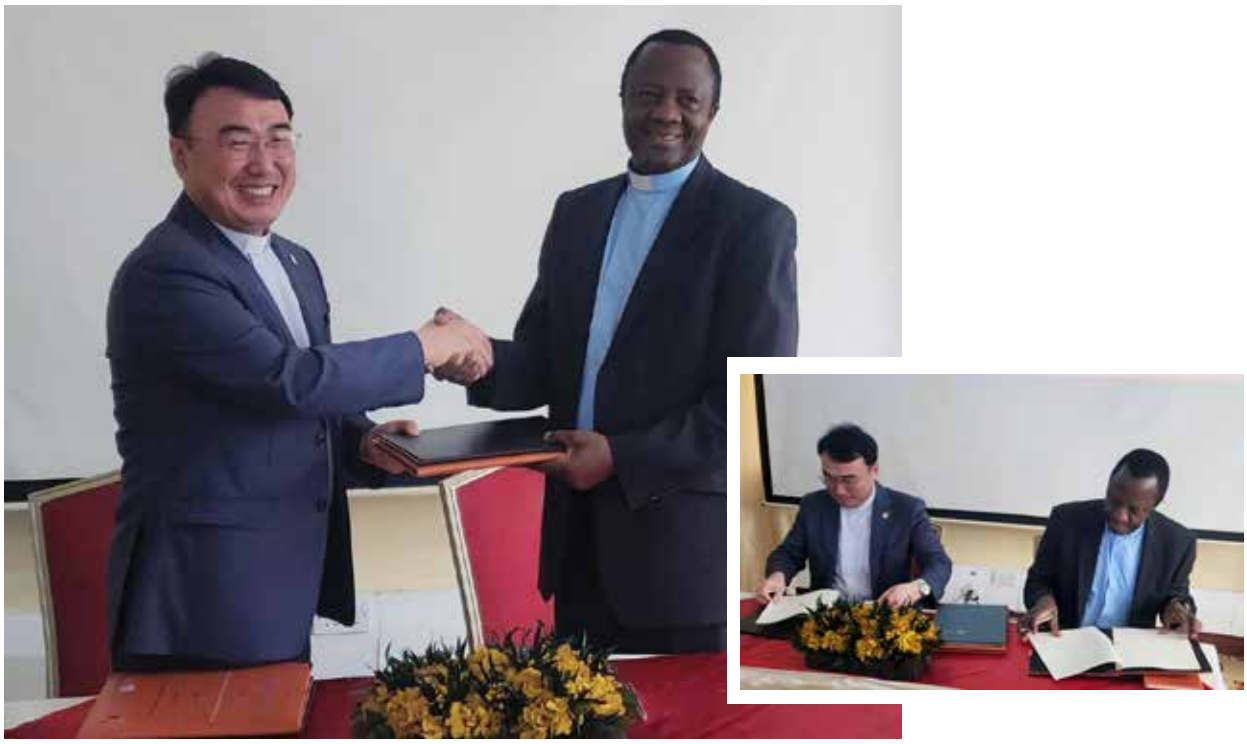
Take your first step into the world of work with CWM Internship

As part of CWM's commitment to resourcing the global church by equipping young people, it is launching a creative, hands-on Internship Programme for youths to develop valuable new skills through cross-cultural experiences and work settings. Located in six regions with its main office in Singapore, they will have individualised work programmes that reflects their interests, passions and skills to develop for their future career, while supporting CWM in its work and priorities.

Successful applicants will engage with member churches and ecumenical organisations in programmatic work, assist in project management and implementation, as well as explore finance and administration to develop new skills, integrated with mentoring that support their personal, professional and spiritual development. Step into the world of work with an established international mission organisation today by sending your completed and endorsed application form through your Synod Office to julie.sim@cwmission.org by 15 May 2023.

Eligibility
Applicants should be between 21-30 years old, able to commit to working full-time from 6-12 months. You are required to be from a CWM member church or ecumenical partner, and your application must be endorsed by your church's General Secretary or Moderator.
Download application form at: https://bit.ly/3LhxAzT
Download CWM Internship brochure at: https://bit.ly/3FlPdeb

CWM and AACC sign MOU to strengthen ecumenical partnership



The General Secretaries of Council for World Mission (CWM) and All Africa Conference of Churches (AACC) have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to facilitate ecumenical partnership and engagement in a signing ceremony on 28 February 2023 in Nairobi, Kenya.

This framework of cooperation will enable both organisations to address missional tasks in the African continent, focusing on economic and social justice, creation care and climate justice, formation in mission, ecumenism, diakonia and leadership, said CWM Moderator Rev. Lydia Neshangwe, who was present to witness the ceremony.

“Representing over 200 million Christians, AACC is one of the largest ecumenical bodies in the African continent that promotes justice and proclaims the gospel of positive transformation. CWM will offer accompaniment to discern God’s will and address the pressing challenges the contemporary society in Africa is facing,” she added.

CWM General Secretary Rev. Dr Jooseop Keum explained that this strategic alliance will allow CWM to contribute to God’s mission not only in Southern Africa where its member churches are located, but also the whole African continent.

Welcoming the collaboration, AACC General Secretary Rev. Dr Fidon Mwombeki said: “Today is a historic moment for AACC. CWM and AACC have a very similar passion and understanding of mission and calling to serve the world. I want to take this opportunity to thank the Board and Moderator for agreeing to work in a more formalised way between both our organisations.”

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.

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 this year. In the area of creation care and climate justice, they will support roundtable consultations for African Faith Actors Network for Climate Justice (AFAN-CJ) leading up to the 28th session of the Conference of the Parties (COP28), which will also see their participation through the organising of COP28 side events.

For more information, please visit https://www.cwmission.org/cwm-aacc/

AFRICA

United Congregational Church of Southern Africa (UCCSA) holds consultation on Ministry and Mission

The United Congregational Church of Southern Africa (UCCSA) recently held a Consultation in Johannesburg aimed at repositioning and reimagining the ministry and mission of the church in a post-modern context. The conference was intended to deepen the UCCSA's missional ethos, align its ministry and equip church leadership with current missional trends, and develop materials that will facilitate renewal of culture and traditions.

Through a consultation process involving various stakeholders within the wider UCCSA family, the UCCSA had developed a Vision Plan to a Mission Plan Programme, followed by identifying leadership development, mission and evangelism, stewardship and oversight as its four main objectives.

During the consultation, the UCCSA officers and secretariat were introduced, followed by UCCSA President Rev. Rupert T. Hambira's address on "Congregationalism in the Contemporary Context". Both UCCSA's clergy and lay leadership discussed the challenges of promoting an authentic ministerial theology geared towards a hurting post-modern world characterised by broad scepticism, and relativism.

EAST ASIA

Presbyterian Church in Taiwan (PCT) officially unveils indigenous Atayal Bible

Church leaders of the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan (PCT) Atayal Presbytery officially presented the Atayal Bible during the 55th Spring Assembly and Thanksgiving Service in Taiwan in 9 February 2023, making it the fifth tribe in Taiwan to have translated the Bible in its ethnic language.

The Atayal Bible refers to the 2019 edition of the modern Chinese translation, as well as the Bibles of the Japanese, English, and Hakka languages

Moderator of the Atayal Presbytery Rev. Hakaw Utaw preached the sermon titled "In God's Word We Stand", encouraging those present to use this Bible to speak Scripture so that the ethnic Atayal language can be passed down to future generations. The publication of the Atayal Bible had restored hope for the renewal of the Atayal language, and reading God's word in their mother tongue had blessed the lives and families of the whole tribe after a 20-year wait.

The Atayal Presbytery will continue editing the Bible concordance dictionary and hold seminars to explain the words, sentences, and grammar used in the Atayal Bible, said Rev. Yabu Eyo, General Secretary of Atayal Presbytery.

Presbyterian Church in Taiwan (PCT) delegates visit CWM Singapore Office

"It is my joy and honour to welcome the first large group of member church delegates to the CWM Office post-pandemic," said Council for World Mission (CWM) General Secretary Rev. Dr Jooseop Keum in his opening remarks during a team visit by 20 delegates from Presbyterian Church in Taiwan (PCT) on 6 February 2023.

The PCT delegates had gathered in the CWM Singapore office for a time of mutual exchange and sharing, where the event commenced after an opening prayer by CWM Mission Secretary for Mission Programme and Partnership Rev. Julie Sim for those gathered, to "discern God's desire for us to carry out God's mission in the world".

During the opening remarks, the CWM General Secretary recounted his participation in a regular youth exchange between PCT and Presbyterian Church in Korea (PCK), supported and facilitated by the CWM Youth Desk. Through this programme, there were stimulating discussions on church mission where he learnt the significance of partnership in mission. This mutual friendship and commitment in mission

remained important 30 years on as it enabled the exchange of ideas and growth through challenges in their respective contexts, Dr Keum added.

He also lauded PCT's invaluable contributions such as former Tainan Theological College principal Shoki Coe, a forerunner whose work on contextualisation as a key aim of mission inspired others; former PCT General Secretary Rev. Dr C.M Kao who courageously and humbly played a pivotal role in the democratisation of Taiwan; former CWM Moderator Dr Huang Po-Ho's remarkable missiological contribution to self-determination, and their work in indigenous theology. Subsequently, CWM Deputy General Secretary – Programmes Dr Sudipta Singh delivered a presentation on the new CWM Programmatic Structure and The Onesimus Project (TOP).

This was followed by a time of sharing and responses by PCT delegates, one of whom expressed gratitude for CWM's faithful accompaniment in PCT's ministry work in recent years, ranging from youth's contextual bible study to indigenous ministries to CWM's Partners-in-Mission (PIM) programme. Heartfelt words of appreciation were received from a guest from Presbyterian Church in Singapore (PCS), the receiving church of PIM Rev. Dr Li Hau-Tiong (PCT) who had played an integral role in building up social mission work for PCS over the past three years in Singapore's rapidly evolving context.

EUROPE

United Reformed Church (URC)'s call for prayer and reflection on one-year anniversary of Ukraine conflict

Moderator of the United Reformed Church (URC) Rev. Fiona Bennett has released a statement urging churches to pray, reflect and respond around the one-year anniversary of Russia's military assault on Ukraine. In lament and sober reflection on the widespread devastation, thousands of civilian casualties and millions of refugees, Rev. Bennett noted that there are also glimmers of hope, with Ukrainians showing resilience and receiving welcome in other countries. As such, she called for continued generosity in offering hospitality and humanitarian support and the need for dialogue to establish a just peace that provides security for all.

Visit https://urc.org.uk/our-news-stories/crisis-in-ukraine/ for more information on how you can render assistance.

Protestant Church in the Netherlands (PKN) starts action against poverty in the Netherlands

Church congregations throughout Netherlands will collect items for the Food Bank as part of a campaign to combat growing poverty launched by Kerk in Actie, the diaconal arm of Protestant Church in the Netherlands (PKN). The "Together Against Poverty" campaign comes as the Food Bank faces an unprecedented 36 percent increase in demand in the past year, with 120,000 people per week now applying for assistance.

Aiming for a sustainable approach to tackle the issue over the next four years, Kerk in Actie will provide short-term assistance through food packages for the Food Bank and long-term assistance through partnerships with SchuldHulpMaatje Nederland to help people get out of debt or avoid it altogether.

PACIFIC

Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand (PCANZ) Moderator's Lent Message

We can grow weary from the cumulative impact of global and national crises in recent years as we grapple with Cyclone Gabrielle and sorely tested by challenges such as the global financial crisis, pandemic, and Christ Church earthquakes. However, like how Jesus was sustained by the Holy Spirit in his time of testing in the wilderness, we, too, can put our trust in and be anchored by scripture, said Right Rev. Hamish Galloway, Moderator of Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand (PCANZ) in his Lent message.

Similar to how angels attended to Jesus after the time of testing, acts of kindness from angels in disguise – complete strangers – were seen in the aftermath of Cyclone Gabrielle, he added. As such, he encouraged church members that "as bearers of the Spirit, guided by the scriptures", they can be inspired by the Lenten story of Jesus and be equipped with readiness for action.

PCANZ parishes responds with relief efforts for Cyclone Gabrielle

Over the past month, parishes of Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand (PCANZ) affected by the recent Cyclone Gabrielle have pitched in with relief efforts for their communities. Through genLend, a well-received disaster relief initiative, St Andrew's Church in Hastings arranged for equipment such as generators, water pumps, and water blasters from around the country to be brought in to power the recovery of affected communities in Hawke's Bay.

Wairoa Union Parish is supporting rebuilding efforts in this remote community where many people are uninsured. Mangapapa Union Church is running a food bank and overcame difficulties to make deliveries to isolated homes. St Columba's Church, Havelock North provided hospitality, and distributed blankets and other necessities on behalf of Civil Defence. St Columba's Presbyterian Church Taradale also provided a warm welcoming space for people, and its minister is collaborating with local pastors for joint care efforts in the vicinity, which includes distribution of aid.

VIEWPOINTS

Disabling Mission:
Reimagining Life-flourishing Societies with the Disabled People

by Silindile Patience Gcabashe

What is Disability?

A disability is defined as a condition or function judged to be significantly impaired relative to the usual standard of an individual or group. The term is used to refer to individual functioning, including physical impairment, sensory impairment, cognitive impairment, intellectual impairment, mental illness, and various types of chronic disease.
Disability is conceptualised as being a multidimensional experience for the person involved. There may be effects on organs or body parts, and there may be effects on a person's participation in areas of life. Disability is grouped into 4 categories namely:

- **Intellectual**
- **Physical**
- **Sensory**
- **Mental Illnes**

Disability has always been associated with being unworthy, “can’t”, “won’t”, “don’t belong”, “don’t fit in, in society” and was considered as sin. The belief that disability indicates punishment for wrongdoing and mars the divine image in humans has often barred those with disabilities from positions of leadership or stigmatised them for their presumed lack of faith.

Disability has been identified as virtuous suffering that must be endured to purify the righteous, a teaching that encourages passive acceptance of social barriers for the sake of obedience to God.

Lastly, disability is being perceived as cases of charity. Although charitable activity for PWD is at times a means of creating justice, it subverts justice when it segregates PWD from society and keeps PWD out of the public eye rather than empowering them for full social, economic, and political participation.

In the Bible, disability is viewed as a disease. Most common diseases mentioned in the Bible are blindness, deafness, dumbness, leprosy, and paralysis. Visual impairment is the most common form of physical disability in antiquity.

But we learn that the inclusivity of PWD is seen in God's plan for the restoration of the Israelites. We find God assuring the remnant of His people, Israel in Babylon, that the land of their captivity would be, restored to them and that they would return back to Jerusalem: "See, I will bring them from the land of the north, and gather them from the ends of the earth. Among them the blind and the lame" (Jeremiah 31:8, 9). Micah 4:6-7 sets out God's plan concerning the people of Israel: "In that day," declares the Lord, "I will gather the lame, I will assemble the exiles and those I have brought grief, I will make the lame a remnant, and those driven away a strong nation."

Mission Margins in context with Disabilities.

When we talk about margins in the context of disability, we are referring to the ways in which disabled people are being marginalised or excluded from society, as well as from the church. This might include physical barriers that prevent people with disabilities from accessing certain spaces or activities, as well as attitudinal barriers that stem from ableist beliefs and prejudices.

Another would be the idea of the disability community or disability culture. Many people with disabilities identify as part of a distinct community with its own values, language, and traditions. This community can be seen as existing at the margins of mainstream society, due to the way in which disability is often stigmatised and misunderstood.

Disability in context of our Church and Community

"Approximately one in five people live with some form of a disability, so chances are there are people in your church that are disabled."

Have a conversation about disability with disabled people in your congregation.

Many churches are unaware of those who identify as disabled who are already in their congregations. Sometimes these can be elderly members who are physically limited due to age, other times there are families who live with invisible disabilities (disabilities that cannot easily be identified), such as autism, ADHD, conduct or mood disorders, or epilepsy.

Approximately one in five people live with some form of a disability, so chances are there are people in your church that are disabled. Plan a small gathering for those who are willing to participate and invite them to share their experiences with the leadership of the church. Be sure to make it a safe space to share their stories, struggles, and suggestions for making the church more inclusive.

Have a conversation about disability with disabled people in your community.

Engaging the disability community at large will help deepen an understanding of issues related to disability. There are many wonderful organisations in the community that your church serves that work with the disability community. In fact, the local school system also serves students with disabilities and their families. This can be a great place to begin the conversation by offering the church's support and resources. Conversing with the disability community outside of your church can give insight into their experience with your church specifically, or more importantly, with the church in general. What do people with disabilities who do not share our faith think of the church? What do they want or need from the church? What can the church do to make them feel that Christians care about the disabled? With

statistics that show that many in the disability community feel unwelcome at church, having this conversation can result in a valuable learning experience as well as creating a strong relationship between your church and this community.

Have a conversation about disability with experts, educators and advocates who are disabled.

In putting ourselves in the shoes of those living with disabilities, we are also placing ourselves under the tutelage of their experiences and their collective education and wisdom. We can learn terms and perspectives such as person-first language and identity-first language, and what it means to have a meaningful discussion about disability. Experts, educators, and disability rights advocates can be great conversation partners. While you may not always be able to have in-person conversations with the numerous experts about disability, you can read and learn from their work, including articles, journals, and videos and sermons by disabled people who are experts in their field. Find authors, leaders, pastors, and theologians that write and speak about disability theology and expose your staff, leaders, and congregation to their work. You need not agree with everything you read or hear, but at least be willing to listen and wrestle through the tough questions that will undoubtedly surface as you travel the path toward more disability awareness.

In the end, the discussion of disability begins with the connection to diversity. As our churches seek to grow and develop disciples of all groups and backgrounds, we must invite the disability to the table to discuss and disciple the church toward greater inclusion and greater impact for God's Kingdom.

What are we saying as people with disabilities?

- Break the stigma associated with disabilities. After all, we are all differently made by God.
- Try not to show that you feel sorry for us in any way. In fact, stop feeling sorry for us.
- If it involves us, include us. Do not plan for us without us.
- Hear us then guide us as we will guide you too.
- Never assume but ask and listen.
- Never make it obvious that we are different.
- Try to be inclusive in a way we talk or address situations: e.g., "for those who are able to stand/rise shall we stand/rise…"
- Let's refrain from asking people to close their eyes in prayer.
- Be kind, be patient with us.
- Do not force prayer on us unless we have asked for it.

What has helped me overcome the challenges associated with being disabled?

First, of all I have a very supportive family, but other than that God blessed me with an amazing daughter, she keeps me going. She is my everything, the reason why I push myself so much.
My local church has been so supportive in every single way, so welcoming, caring and loving. They receive me as I am, and I appreciate the fact that they don't want to change me nor change themselves so I can fit in. Everything they do is to ensure that I do not feel left out or feel different. I am comfortable with being me.

Key Concepts in the Disability Community

- **Accessible**

describes the nature of accommodations for people who have a disability. Say an accessible parking space rather than handicapped parking or disabled restroom. Accessible also describes products and services for people with vision or hearing disabilities, such as when a hospital provides patient education materials in large print, or a university adds captions to a recruitment video. Handicapped has negative connotations because it suggests that obstacles to participation are in the person rather than in the environment.

- **Advocacy**

is an active process designed to make institutions and social and political systems more responsive to the civil rights, needs and choices of individuals. Through individual and group advocacy, people with disabilities can communicate their rights under various civil rights laws and participate in decision-making that affects them.

- **Consumer**

is the term used by many in the disability community to refer to someone with a disability. The civil rights movement in the U.S. inspired the independent living movement of the 1970s, which maintained that people with disabilities are consumers of assistive services and have a responsibility to evaluate and control those services. On a similar note, some people prefer to be described by what they use, such as wheelchair user, ventilator user or mental health service user.

- **Independent living (IL)**

refers to the philosophy that people with disabilities should be able to make decisions that affect their own lives. IL also refers to a civil rights movement that advocates for equal participation in community life and a service system made up of centres for independent living. These non-residential resource centres are run by and for people with disabilities, as well as for the benefit of the entire community. Their core services include advocacy, information and referral, independent living skills training, peer counselling and, most recently, de-institutionalisation of people with disabilities.

- **Inclusion**

is perhaps best known for its role in public school programs, though the concept has a wider significance. It means that people with disabilities are considered full citizens, with equal opportunity to participate in community life. People with disabilities should also be included in conversations about diversity.

- **The medical model**

is an attitude and practice that regards disability as a defect or sickness that must be cured or normalised through medical intervention. People in the disability community prefer the social or independent living model which regards disability as a neutral difference between people – and acknowledges that people with disabilities can be healthy. In the social model, problems related to disability are caused by the interaction between the individual and the environment rather than the individual's disability itself. These problems can be remedied by changing social attitudes, physical environments, public policies, and other barriers to full participation.

Adopted from: University of New Hampshire - https://iod.unh.edu/resource/key-concepts-disability-community#:~:text=People%20in%20the%20disability%20community,with%20disabilities%20can%20be%20healthy.

Silindile Patience Gcabashe is an aspiring Business Analyst and an experienced Software Test Analyst with 8 years of experience. Due to a Motor Vehicle Accident (MVA) in 2012, she has a disability called paraplegia. Born and raised in Ndwedwe Umsunduze, KwaZulu Natal, she was appointed as a disability convenor for the KZN region in 2021. Currently she is the Denominational PWD convenor. Disability is something close to her heart and she is passionate about ensuring that no one is excluded in any form based on their disabilities or their differences. She now resides at Amanzimtoti South Coast with her daughter, her sister and two nephews.

Creating Life-flourishing Societies for Survivors of Sexual Assault

by Belinda Crawford

By the Rivers of Babylon, when Trauma goes to church

Bible readings: 1 John 1:1, Hebrew 4:15, Ps 137:3-4

Sexual gendered based violence is not only a long-standing phenomenon but still is an issue that seems to be an unquenchable issue in society. It goes without saying that every individual will experience some sort of violence at some point in their life. My continuous research on why sexual abuse is still the highest form of violence, especially in South Africa is ongoing. As a thriving survivor of sexual assault, my focus for this article is on trauma and its impact on the individual. In light of the objectives of "Breaking out from Babylon" my choice of scripture is found in Psalm 137: 1-4 (Message Version) Alongside Babylon's rivers we sat on the banks; we cried and cried, remembering the good old days in Zion. Alongside the quaking aspen, we stacked our unplayed harps; That's where our **captors** demanded songs, ***sarcastic and mocking:*** "Sing us a happy Zion song!" Oh, how could we ever sing God's song in this wasteland?

The abovementioned scripture is sort of self–explanatory, here the writer is expressing a plethora of issues such as displacement, lament, suppression, and oppression. These symptoms are boxes that would be ticked should a sexually assaulted individual be given an evaluation questionnaire. What is prevalent in today's society is the use of social media. The sensitivity of the traumatized individual is no longer valid. What is commonly practiced in society is the term **"Trauma-porn"**. Trauma porn according to the urban dictionary is *"When a writer exaggerates parts of a traumatic event in their writing to make the reader feel upset. Most of the time, a writer thinks they are being deep and trendy when they are really just disrespecting and glamorizing trauma."* When a person experiences sexual assault, whether it be an acute or chronic event, they are subjected to trauma that amplifies three crucial facts: their diminished sense of power, their loss of meaning in life, and their neurobiological re-organisation. One becomes subjected to life equivalent to ICU-dead but alive and reliant on artificial life support. In retrospect, my experience on thejourney to holistic healing took tity-six years. When I was about to start my sixth year, a crucial stage in my development as a child was cut short. Since the internal war and rage continued when I was silent or still, my academic comprehension suffered and I talked, fidgeted, and played a lot in class.

Trauma is not *simply remembering a traumatic event;* rather, it is the body's physiological reaction to the memory. The autonomic ecosystem of our bodies that does not require our permission such as breathing, digestion, blood circulation, and fighting off bacteria is either shut down or disrupted, and we malfunction. Our bodies are focusing on what the leading world-renowned trauma expert Dr. Bessel Van Kolk terms "the body keeps score" meaning the body has recorded the event and that is where the focus is drawn to, hence all the ailments, migraines, infections, ulcers, mood swings, bipolar symptoms, fawning, excessive mobilization (meaning consistency state of busyness) and the list goes on and on, the root cause is unresolved trauma.

One of my earliest recollections is raising my hand and wriggling it so hard it almost came out of its socket whenever the school inspectors or intern teachers asked if anyone wanted to

read aloud or recite a poem. I figured that since it was a new face, the teacher might be able to spot me in the sea of dysfunction I was in and save me. In the absence of that, I found that acting and dressing like boys helped me get by. Six days a week, my carers would beat me and ask, "What is wrong with this child?" because I played with boys. This is still a frequently asked question, although it should be "What happened to this chiild/ person.

Trauma porn displaces individuals alongside Babylon's rivers banks; crying and remembering the good old days of pre-trauma. The authentic version of an individual is stacked away by the captors while society demands songs, and is rich in sarcasm and mockery, through manifested altered behavior patterns and survival modes are the lyrics of a survivor "Oh!, how could we ever sing God's song in this wasteland?". It's no longer just an assault by a stranger in a basement or back alley; sexual assault is happening in our homes and in places of worship at an alarming rate today. Sexual abuse is a form of psychological homicide are margins are the walking dead amongst us. The question then follows how can we create life-flourishing societies for survivors of sexual assault?

In 1 John 1:1 1 That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched—this we proclaim concerning the Word of life. All the hype and posters conversations in boardroom meetings about those whom they have not seen and touched with their hands are continuing to benefit from the traumatic experiences while margins are left suppressed despite the widespread dissemination of information about these cases and individuals. According to the text, it is impossible for someone who was not present at the scene of the crime to give a credible account of what happened. Hebrew 4: 15-16 "For we have not a high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us, therefore, come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." I would like to elaborate on the word infirmities from the Greek concordance which means "asthenes"; feebleness (of mind or body); by implication, malady; morally, frailty. By implication, those who are feeble of mind and body are the ones with credible witnesses once their bodies have been healed. As the true mediators, they are the ones who have the boldness to call, the ones who can offer grace in time of need.

My proposal therefore for a life-flourishing society for survivors of sexual assault is to deconstruct retributive therapy. By this I mean when engaging with the individual, to not highlight what has happened e.g. "What has happened is wrong and so bad, shame" but rather lend a listening ear in an inclusive manner, e.g. "What or is there anything we can do for you? Would you like to talk about it?" The language of "us and them" promotes exclusion. To become a trauma-informed society, we should replace the language with "WE". To evaluate how this work affects us, we cannot remain optimistic or energized if we lack knowledge.

A trauma-informed society cannot survive without skillful treatment as trauma cannot be healed with words alone. My personal observation is that trauma is an inevitable fact of our daily lives. We cannot escape from it, everyone is either suffering or suffered trauma. We also need to differentiate between trauma, shock, anger, and frustration. Trauma in essence is not what has happened to you, but rather what has happened to your body after the event over an extensive period of time. Trauma is the body reliving the event, another perception is the organic function of the body is now compromised. Although medicine is necessary for some instances, there is a higher percentage rate of traumatized individuals embarking on a healing journey without having to see a doctor about how their bodies need to heal.

Trauma research proves that the very first step towards healing is to get the individual to feel “SAFE” within themselves, It may not take thirty-six years like mine, which entailed sharing my story publicly after thirty years of silence, having a somatic experience, which means holistic healing of the mind, body, and spirit, and realigning to its original state; yoga, meditation, salsa dancing, and other similar practices; and sharing my story publicly. Because of the trauma that has been inflicted on our societies and institutions, I believe that our churches and other faith-based organizations are struggling with this issue and unable to find solutions, therefore they exhibit trauma symptoms such as cognizant dissonance, shutdown, over-communication, excessive anxiety, extreme mobility, slacktivism. The United Nations defines slacktivism as when people “support a cause by performing simple measures” but are not necessarily “engaged or devoted to making a change.” Other frequently used terms are 'clicktivism' or 'armchair activism'. Examples include sharing and promoting content about issues through Facebook, Twitter, and other social platforms, joining organizations without contributing significantly, boycotting abusive organizations, and signing and sharing online petitions. Until everyone deals with and heals from their personal traumas they will keep doing to others what they do with their own pain. Healing is possible and we all can heal together through Christ our Lord, Amen!

Belinda Crawford, a South African liminal, is a student at the University of KwaZulu Natal, completing a Master's degree in Theology. Additionally, she is the coordinator of earth theology at the Ujamaa Centre for biblical and theological community development and research. Regarding environmental and climate justice concerns, she focuses on developing contextual Bible studies and is passionate about social transformation.

Social Justice: Mission from the margins to the margins with the margins: Gospel in a public space

by Sindiso Jele

INTRODUCTION

The question that normally arises from the people who hear about this thematic area of Social justice is, "What is it?" "What are the activities in this thematic area? Does Social justice have a theoretical framework?" This article explores what Social justice is within the CWM context because social justice means different things to different people, therefore generalization would commit the fallacy of ambiguity.

LIFE FLOURISHING SOCIETIES

"Breaking out from Babylon" is the public witness of decolonizing our minds, worldviews, and socio-economic-ecological and gender relations. Creating life-flourishing societies requires the commitment to denounce all systems and practices that stigmatize, criminalize, exclude, and dehumanize people because of their ethnicity, race, caste, gender, sexual orientation, health, and class. It also entails the creative endeavours to reimagine alternative societies and communities that celebrate differences and diversities while practising deep solidarity to save the world from the viruses of supremacy, hegemony, and exclusion (CWM Strategic framework 2019-2029).

MISSION FROM THE MARGINS AND WITH THE MARGINS: DEFINITION OF MISSION AS A POINT DEPARTURE

It is common that when we speak of mission, what comes to mind is

> '…..We think of missionary societies, of evangelistic and church-planting missions, of long-term career missionaries or short-term missions, and of global networks of such agencies and individuals.'

Whether this thinking is correct or not, there is a common notion of sending and being sent. The question would be who is sending and who is being sent and from where, margins and from the centre and to do what, a question of agenda and content.

Therefore, the mission within the Social Justice contest is a response to the divine impulse, the sending of the community (CWM) that discerns and responds (cf Gen 45:7, Exodus 3:10, 1 King 19:15-18, Jeremiah 1:7 and Luke 4:16-19) are the indication of being sent and the mission explained clearly.

MISSION WITH THE MARGINS

It must be argued from the Social Justice lens that the community activists did not bring God to the margins, rather, it is God who brought the activist to the margins. This must be constantly rung into the minds of those who are engaged and have a passion for community activism. The agenda is in the community

It must be further noted that:

> God has called into existence a people to participate in the accomplishment of that mission. All our mission flows from the prior mission of God. And that, "Mission arises from the heart of God himself, and is communicated from his heart to ours. Mission is the global outreach of the global people of a global God."

Shenk (1999) argues that

'……Changing Frontiers of Mission reflects on the history of missions and seeks to discern its path for the future. Ever since Jesus' time, the mission must precede the church. The renewal of the church is linked to the recovery of this priority of mission. Unlike in the past, where the "frontier" was a geographical location, the future "frontier" is symbolized by outward movement, away from the status quo, and toward new challenges, growth and opportunities….'

The contemporary world as the mission praxis: what is God doing in the margins?

The mission premise now is '…from anywhere to everywhere…'. Veteran missiologist Samuel Escobar argues that;

'….Christian mission is no longer a matter of missionaries from the West going to the rest of the world. Rather, the growth of Christianity in Latin America, Africa and parts of Asia is eclipsing that of the Western church. In the third millennium of the Christian era, Christian mission is truly global, with missionaries from all places going to all peoples…….'

This change means a new understanding of the mission field, which is moving from being geographically focused to issues focused, especially in the post-colonial world. It will also be argued that even from the margins there is mission wisdom.
If we agree that the mission is now issues focused, a shift from geo-location where it was from the powerful to the powerless, from the civilized to the uncivilized need to be emphasized.

The following defines the contemporary world and a relevant mission work may speak to these among many:

1. Land and poverty. These two cannot be separated. The missional church does not see poverty as a result of laziness, but as a result of the colonial legacy and continuous capital monopoly of the first-world countries.
2. Political instability, where women are raped, children denied love, and men killed. Where violence and evil have been institutionalized and funded by tax
3. The voice of the voiceless is a concept that needs to be challenged in Social Justice engagement. We need to appreciate that there is voice and wisdom from the margin.

'Advocacy' as the mission model in doing mission with the margins

In coming up with the Mission model that can be appropriate, let it be noted that mission is not a neutral project, it is an undertaking to reform and transform

The model 1 I propose allows community profiling

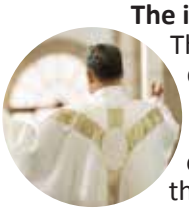
'…to analyze …..the community, discern injustices, across the opportunities for Christian proclamation and action and formulate mission priorities…' (TEEC 2013:2:1.1)

This will allow us to have a correct point of entry and accordingly participate in the mission field. The diagram below attempts to demonstrate this point on how the community is seen and understood from the point of doing the mission from the margins

	Insiders	Outsiders
Participants	(1) VIPs	(4) Resident Aliens
Non-participants	(2) Little people	(3) Tourists

Notes on the Diagram

The insider participants (VIPs)



These are the people in control, the people with power and influence, those who make the rules and enforce them. They define the community boundaries

Where do they draw support?
Every institution has some sort of 'legitimators', in this case these are: Religious leaders, Ancestors and African Traditional Religions practitioners, Education, Laws of the land and institution, Economic status, Customs
This list reinforces the boundaries set by the VIPs

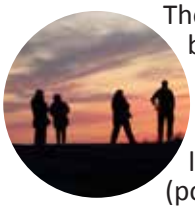
The insider non-participants (Little ones)

They are part of the system/institution. They are insiders but they do not run the show. They are considered to be immature, but will eventually grow to become VIPs. In some communities this is where you find women and children. They are accepted by the VIPs, but marginal to the ruling of the community.
The understanding here is that the people under this category are educated or socialized to become VIP, but they will never be

The outsider non-participants (Tourists)

These are those who pass through the community. Even if they have impact on the community (through trade, building schools and clinics), they have little relevance to the community as they choose to be outsiders. Their influence doesn't threaten the ***'insiders'***
Christian missionaries have always been in this position. An outsider who has failed to engage significantly with the local community, but always judged the community lifestyle as barbaric, and uncivilized thus affirming the notion of racial and gender superiority.

The outsider participant or Resident Alien



They differ from tourist, because they are not just passing through. They significantly become involved in the life of the community (positively or negatively), without becoming a member.

There is a second group of missionaries, who have been resident Aliens. They have identified closely with the community, but always make it a point that they don't get absorbed to the culture of the community

But unlike tourists, the Resident Aliens cannot be ignored or dismissed. The VIPs will bring them close to them so that they will control them or make the Little ones. The Resident Aliens refuse this invite; they will prefer to remain outside but at a critical distance from the structures.

The Resident Aliens find themselves in the territory between the power brokers (VIPs) and the marginalized (the little people and the Tourist). This means they are well placed to see and analyze the community dynamics, to see how the power is used and abused.

Firstly, their voices can be prophetic.

Secondly, they can interfere with the community and disturb it.

People can be excluded from participating in the mission of God (thus relegated to non-participants) on the bases of race, sexual orientation, economic status.

The question that we are struggling to answer is how to participate in the mission of God in the Contemporary world. But to answer this question let us take another detour and see how Jesus participated in the mission of His father, with his community. The diagram below will guide us

	Insiders	Outsiders
Participants	(1) Sadducees, Pharisees, the Sanhedrin,Herodians, Rabbis, and the Scribes	(4) The Roman authorities, Jesus of Nazareth and his disciples
Non-participants	(2) Tax collectors, sinners, women, the children and the poor	(3) Gentiles, Samaritans and the Lepers

You may question why Jesus is not under the VIPs yet he was called the Rabbi? The missionary Jesus of Nazareth was not a VIP due to the following;

- He was born into a poor family, his mother got pregnant before marriage, and was in a Galilean city of trouble-makers. He followed the lower-class citizen and his career was as a Carpenter.

Though called Rabbi, there is no biblical and extra-biblical evidence presented to show that to he indeed went Rabbinic school or was trained as a lawyer. He earned the title through healing and teaching ministry (Mark 1:21-28, 6:1-6), through doing a mission in the margins and the title was more pronounced in the margins.

- There is evidence that Jesus related with the Little people and declared that the Basileia is for such people (Matthew 5:1-12). Those in the margins.
- It is a fact that Jesus of Nazareth was a male Jew, but how he related with the women is unusual of the men of his time; he spoke freely with them and treated them as full human beings. He also related with the children with dignity (Mark 9:33-37, 10:13-16

But in advancing these arguments, there is a need for us to be careful, lest we end up using these as the criteria for categorizing. For Jesus we witness fundamental shifts in the understanding of the mission with the margins.
The missionary work that led Jesus to be killed: A route to take in doing mission with the margins:

- He challenged the VIPs, by declaring that kingdom of God belongs to Him, even to those outside the boundaries they have set. This was undermining their power base

Mission from the margins with the margins: my submission

There is a need to admit that we are in a polycentric community, even among the Little people there are centres and margins, even among the VIPs and Resident Aliens there are Centers and margins. This means that there is a multitude of activities, so in mission, we have to think of all that God is doing in his great purpose for the whole of creation and all that he calls us to do in cooperation with that purpose.

Mission, has a conceptual, generic breadth, and a word like "missional" can be as broad in significance as the word "missionary", but these are the words we have to fill with specific meanings rather than assume or imagine that in social justice are understood the same way as in other thematic areas.

I end with a prayer by the UCCSA Youth member Ms Alibongwe Mahlangu:

'…Greetings to you Brothers and Sisters in Christ, As the central Region Youth Ministry, we commit ourselves to working towards a society in which men and boys celebrate the best of who they are- embracing a space where God is recognised in those, we meet along the way.
Let us pray,
God of love, Compassion, and healing, we pray to you.

We pray for women and girls who have experienced violent relationships, that they find safety and healing from their trauma and rebuild their lives,
For children who have witnessed violence in their homes against their mothers and sisters and other family members, that they will experience healing and hope.

For men who speak out against forms of expression that demean women that their voices will grow stronger.

We pray for right and just relations between women and men that together we may transform and overcome violence in all its forms and learn to celebrate our diversity and interdependence.

We look forward to the age of peace, when violence is banished, both women and men are able to love and to be loved, and the work and wealth of our world is justly share.

Konke lokhu sikucela kuwe Nkulunkulu ngoba uthembisile izwini lakho ukuth sicele noma yini egameni lakho uzosenzela, Siyakhuleka egameni lakho Jesu.'

Amen

Sindiso Jele (PHD) is CWM Mission Secretary: Social Justice

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Cast Out Caste: Breaking out from Casteism

by Vedha Kani Na

Scripture Reading: Lk 14:25–27

The socio–cultural physiology of India has been historicised with the caste system by the Caste–Hindu world order since the Aryan invasion of India. This caste system institutionalized the Dalits as untouchables, and slaves to caste Hindus. According to the Hindu Scriptures, god of creator is a god of hierarchy and inequality (the god Brahma), who ordains the hierarchical social order as social framework. Having said, when we consider the creation story, of our Scripture, which is the basic theological framework in defining and understanding Theos (God), also it is the basic element of the Scripture, and any religion for that matter. Understanding God as creator is the beginning of anyone's realization of salvation in her/his spiritual journey.

The Christian Scripture theologically claims every follower of Christ to believe in God, as God of creator. The one who created the world now sending his son into the world as his expression of love towards the world. So, God as creator is the beginning of experiencing the liberation/salvation of God through Jesus. If then, reception of the Brahmanical creation story that is Varna [1]–the hierarchical creation order of the Hindu Scripture, in order to define and claim the social identity of a person even by the Asian/Indian Christians is, undeniably denouncing the theology of creation story of our own Scripture. Consequently, it is as devaluing our God as God of creation.

For the caste system defines who comes from where in the hierarchical creation order of Varna. Dalits are not part of this hierarchy as they are depicted even below the very bottom of the hierarchical order. The Indian church, in particular, still shamelessly sustains this caste system within the church, as because it holds power dynamics in terms of social status and identity which also plays the same role within the ecclesial power dynamism.

The ongoing reality of the church seems to affirm that the faith in Jesus does not necessarily demand the Christians to deny their social identity of caste, in order to become a member of the church. If faith does not challenge the various social aspects and engagements of the believer in the light of the core value of the Gospel i.e., love, equality, justice, and peace, then there is a danger in that faith. Jesus points out this aspect openly to his followers through the invitation that,

> **Whoever comes to me and does not hate father and mother, wife and children, brothers, and sisters, yes, and even life itself, cannot be my disciple. Whoever does not carry the cross and follow me cannot be my disciple (Lk. 14:26, 27).**

There are two demands in this invitation to the disciples by Jesus: "Hate" and "Carry the cross." The church pulpits have failed to emphasis the aspect of hate as one of the two demands in following Jesus, while more emphasis has been given exclusively on the view of "carrying the cross."

How does Jesus who himself is a manifestation of God's love can offer an invitation to hate? This is

[1] The term Varna, Sanskrit Varṇa (means "colour"-a class distinction based on differences in degree of skin pigmentation between alleged lighter-skinned invaders Aryans and the darker indigenous people of ancient India) was introduced by a hymn in Rigveda of Hindu Scripture which classifies human society into four groups as part of its creation theory: the Brahmins (priest), the Kshtriya (noble), the Vaishya (commoner), and the Shudra (servant) were created from the mouth, arms, thighs, and feet of Brhama (Hindu god, the creator) respectively. The fifth class which is not part of the varna system is called as avarna (classless), the "untouchables" which includes Dalits and tribal groups. The system of four classes is fundamental to the views the traditional lawgivers held of society.

the very primary question we encounter when we read Lk 14:26, 27. This question leads us to investigate the verse to see, what exactly Jesus wants his disciples to hate, i.e., the parents, siblings, property and even the "self." How does the one who made the 10 commandments into one commandment of Love, i.e., Love your God and your neighbour as yourself," can invite to hate everyone and even one's self?

Μιçέω as Missiological Call to the Church

The Grek word "to hate" is μιçέω which means hatred, aversion, rejection, divorce, and detest. The central focus of his invitation lies in Jesus' call to deny the family, relationship, properties, and the self. For, in order to carry one's own cross to follow Jesus, at the first level, one has to deny everything including her/his self. Hating everything we are under obligation to love, including our own souls is the condition of following Jesus and fellowship with him as disciples.

Here the denial is hating, not in psychological sense, but as disowning, renunciation, and rejection. It means divorcing with all the existing relationships and ties with the family. This complete detachment from the family and property ties also applies to the disciples' social relations and the consequential social status and identity in their society. The disciples were demanded to deny their social identity and status, through hating their family ties, which were given by the imperial socio–political system which was totally against the Kingdom values of love, justice, equality, and peace.

Becoming a disciple of Jesus was primarily meant as becoming a member of the Kingdom of God. In order to become the member of the family of Jesus, one has to deny the existing family ties as it was an expression of their connection with the emperor. In Jesus' words, it is as "serving two masters" (Lk 16:13; Matt 6:24). For Jesus, the problem in their connection with the emperor in terms of their identity and the family relations which was defined in line with the imperial model. For, family is the lowest political organization through which the Roman political system was maintained. Thus, denying the existing family relations and becoming the member of the Jesus family/movement was the foundational commitment of the disciples towards their leader.

Therefore, becoming a disciple meant to become a part of the Jesus community which was created in and around Jesus. In order to become a member of Jesus community, Jesus challenged the followers to deny not the family itself, but the social–power dynamism in which the family was woven, and the property which was obtained through the unequal Roman economic system.

μισέω (hate) and Discipleship

We often claim that we are the disciples of Jesus as Christians. But the Gospel clearly demonstrates that becoming Christian does not mean becoming disciples of Jesus. The followers of Jesus were invited by him to become his disciples by divorcing their social identities and ties given by the imperial world order.

More interestingly, Jesus demanded his disciples to deny even their "self" which was defined by and colored with, characterized with the imperial values which were in contradiction to the values of his teachings. Jesus' reference to the growing hatred towards disciples in the future (Matt 10:22; 24:9; 10; Mk 13:13; Lk 21:17) can be well explained as an expression of the imperial world as they denied it and were no longer part of it.

De–casting the Casteist Church in India

The very basic biblical text of invitation to become a disciple of Jesus was offered with a demand to hate the social order in which they had been part of. The same invitation is being given to the church to disown and deny its commitment towards the imperial caste social order which is against the equality of fellow Christian. De–casting the church is not the invitation to the present Asian/Indian church, but as a demand by the Scripture on which its foundation is claimed to be laid upon. Ironically, it is not the case with almost all the denominations in India as they have been trying hard to bring Jesus and interpretation of the Bible in support of the existing caste social order.

If the church or Christian communities are still laying their foundation on the Hindu–caste creation story and creator then, it is a threat to the Bible and the God who is revealed through the Bible to which the church is holding on for its authority and commitment.

μετάνοια (repentance) of the Church

The church which has been enjoying by portraying itself as a source of salvation to others now being challenged by Jesus with his demand to repent from its unwavering obligation to the caste and its power relations thus far. The church communities have to dared to claim that "Church is the body of Christ in which there is no space for other gods of oppression and differences to manifest their colonial interests."

If so, the church's genuine attempts towards μετάνοια needs to begin from revisiting its theological frameworks and interpretations which were received from the colonial missionary frameworks. The Gospel which was preached within the imperial framework was not able to see the imperialism of the caste system in India. It is a huge commitment of the church to deny even the Gospel interpretations given in the colonial framework in order to envision the Asian/Indian church as discipleship community of Jesus in the post–modern world and to offer the liberative values of love, justice, equality, and peace to all in the established corporate world view of present global community.

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RE-CONNECTED PIM STORIES

Walking around Grenada

by Rev. Nigel Lindsay

What a great experience as I walked over 5 days around Grenada, spending between 3.5 hours and 5 hours a day travelling and being hosted by some lovely people from different Church denominations. The plan was to raise money through sponsorship to repair Samaritan Presbyterian Church so we can do more community activity.

I was blessed as some people from the Church came out to see me off and prayed for me as I set off. I was aware of other prayers from all over Grenada and in the UK. On the steep hills and the day of pouring rain, when my feet ached and the bag felt heavy. The prayers gave me fuel to keep going. The prayers protected me. I prayed for a few people on my Journey. Jesus would go and find a quiet place to pray, sometimes before and after he did something. It sustained him, energized him and ensured he was doing God's will in partnership with his Father in heaven. Many say that God knows our needs anyway, true, but he wants us to connect and partner with him. Prayer leads to actions and more is achieved when we work together in partnership with God

(Matthew 14: 21- 23, Luke 18: 1-8).

As I walked and passed a Church of any denomination I would pray for that Church and that God would bring unity to the body of Christ in Grenada. I was hosted on my four nights by Methodist, Catholics, Presbyterians and Anglicans and supported by other tribes of Church. God wants us to be united in what is a majority of issues, there is more that unites us than divides us.

Yes, we have some theological differences, different structures and some different ways of being Church. However, we can do project together, encourage each other in prayer and sometime resources. Many of the issues we face are the same.

(Psalm 133, 1 Corinthians 12: 12-311 Corinthians 1: 10- 17)

As I walked down to the main road from St David's Catholic Church, you could see the beauty of the hills, sea, houses, schools and farms laid out before me. Grenada is such an amazing and blessed country with sun, rain and good soil, just a bit hilly at time. I am impressed by all the street cleaners I see around in some places making the roads clear of rubbish. How do we encourage our people to not waste so much single use disposable items. I know in the Covid period many turned to this for safety, but it has set us back.

On the steep hills and the day of pouring rain, when my feet ached and the bag felt heavy. The prayers gave me fuel to keep going. The prayers protected me. I prayed for a few people on my Journey.

We can walk with water in a reusable bottle, rather than buying one of expecting others to provide at our destination. We could carry our own containers for food, we could wash up plates and cups. So many cars passed me with just one person in and a short drive to the shop down the road causes more pollution than some longer drives. We live on a Island with many hills, but some of the flatter islands are in danger of being under water soon. Do explore more about how we can do just a little to help combat this Climate Crisis. We have a responsibility to those who are suffering due to the mismanagement of our environment.

(Genesis 1: 26-28, Matthew 25:40)

I started out and walked past the Kirani James Sports Stadium. Over years many have celebrated great physical accomplishments and I wander what the future holds. I had expected to see lots of young people out playing physical games in this holiday but very few. It seems that many stay at home and watched a screen and loose the opportunity to socialize and make the most of this amazing environment.

Many of our older people have kept fit walking and tending the farm, now in older age they are still able to get out and enjoy. If we don't use and build up our bodies it will become more of a challenge in old age. I believe we are all on a Journey, physically, emotionally, spiritually and we have to exercise and grow in a holistic way. A bit more walking will help us and our environment.

(Philippians 3: 12- 14, James 1: 12, 1 Corinthians 9:24-27)

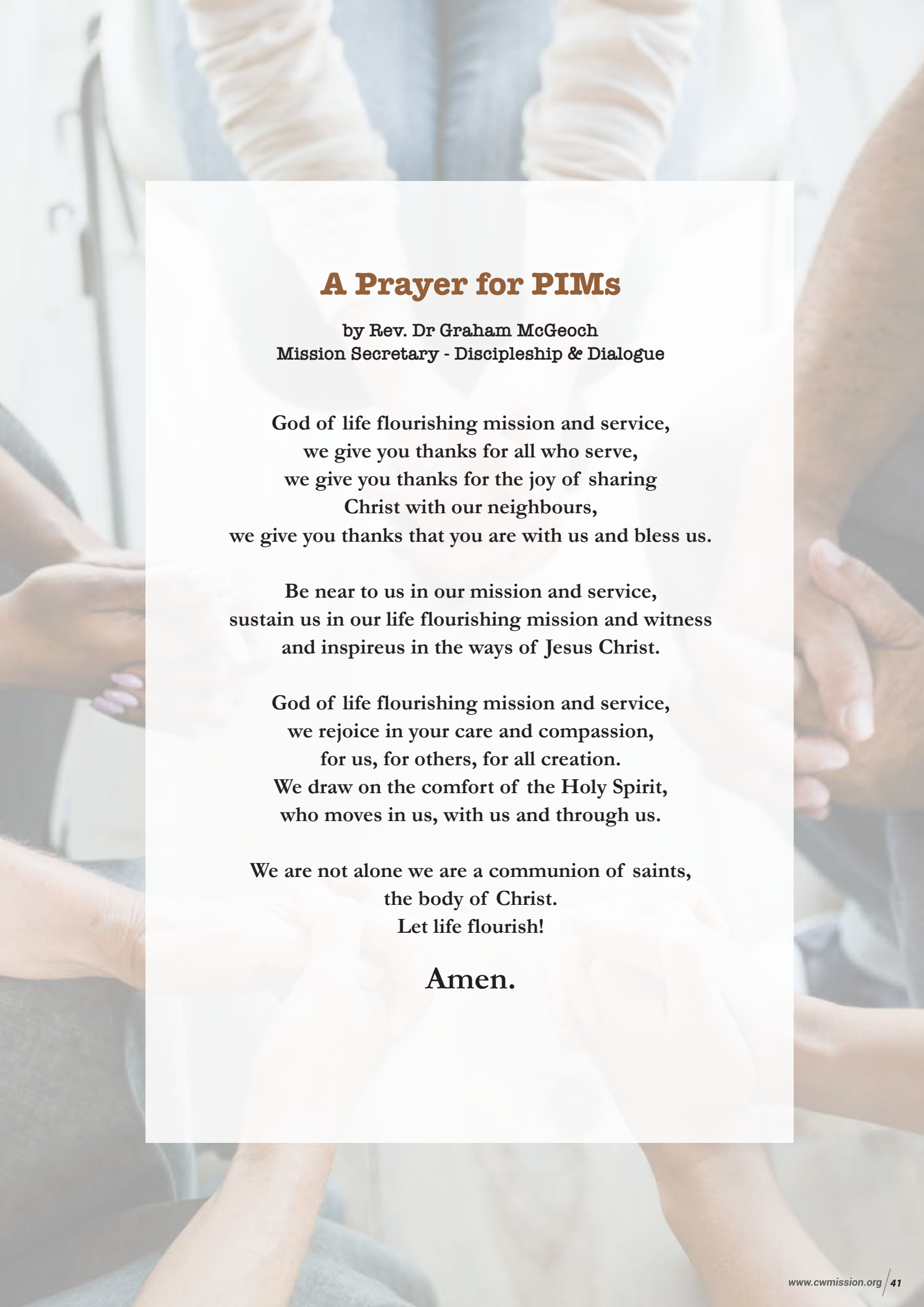
I had been told that some teachers from Samaritan Presbyterian School planned to meet me in Victoria and walk the last part of the journey with me. I looked forward to this and was pleased that more than I had expected and some of their children walked. We tried to stay together, but some had longer legs and a faster pace, but we were all in it together and celebrated as people arrived at the end.

We are all on a faith journey and sometimes it feels like we walk alone, but God is always with us. It is good to walk with others, but we are all unique, go at a different pace, divert to engage in different things. Walking together involves negotiation and whilst that can be challenging it helps us to grow and understand more.

Some think we will not go to church or be involved in a Christian group, too much hypocrisy and try to do Christianity alone. But fellowship and being with others is key to our growth. In becoming a Christian we have not reached a destination, but have started a journey. I pray we can all journey with others.

(Matthew 9: 37-38, Hebrews 13: 1-2, Philemon 1: 6, Romans 14: 1-12)

Nigel Lindsay is from the Congregational Federation (CF), a CWM member church in the Europe region and currently serves with the Presbyterian Church in Grenada. From his walk, Nigel was able to raise funds for much needed repairs on his church.



A Prayer for PIMs

by Rev. Dr Graham McGeoch
Mission Secretary - Discipleship & Dialogue

God of life flourishing mission and service,
we give you thanks for all who serve,
we give you thanks for the joy of sharing
Christ with our neighbours,
we give you thanks that you are with us and bless us.

Be near to us in our mission and service,
sustain us in our life flourishing mission and witness
and inspireus in the ways of Jesus Christ.

God of life flourishing mission and service,
we rejoice in your care and compassion,
for us, for others, for all creation.
We draw on the comfort of the Holy Spirit,
who moves in us, with us and through us.

We are not alone we are a communion of saints,
the body of Christ.
Let life flourish!

Amen.

TAKE A LOOK

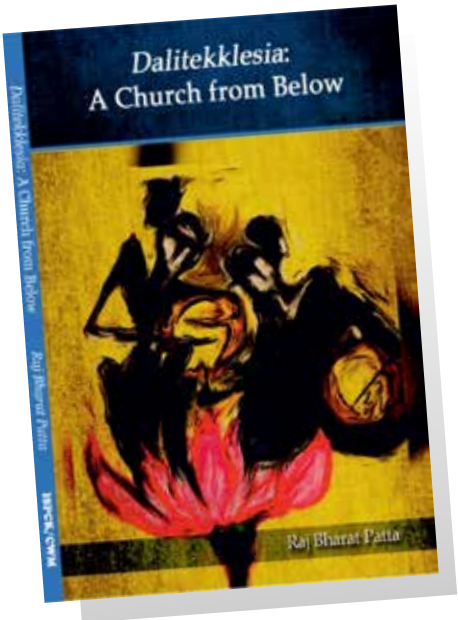
"Church and Disability"

by Samuel George

How wide are church doors in including people with disabilities in its life, ministry and mission? How open are we in decolonising our minds, biblical interpretations and theological constructs that privilege able-bodied people and demonise, ostracise and exclude people with disability? The issue of disability has always been a thorny issue within the faith communities, including the biblical communities. Either they are seen as beneficiaries of charity or their disability is seen as a curse from God. In recent years, we have witnessed a shift in this ableist approach thanks to the affirmation of the rights of the people with disability as human rights. This has created a ripple effect even in churches. However, there is still a reluctance in including them in the total life of the church. Their inclusion requires genuine introspection and metanoia from the part of the church.

This volume, coming from the lived experiences of people with disability, helps us to understand disability as a faith imperative and justice issue. It represents the determination of the community to reclaim the sanctuary and to redeem it by destroying the walls—physical, mental, theological, biblical and cultural—that reduce people with disability to the status of recipients of sympathy and charity. The book further offers theological and missional guidelines for the faith communities to live out their faith in Christ, the incarnated disabled God.

Visit https://www.ispck.org.in/book/church-and-disability for details.



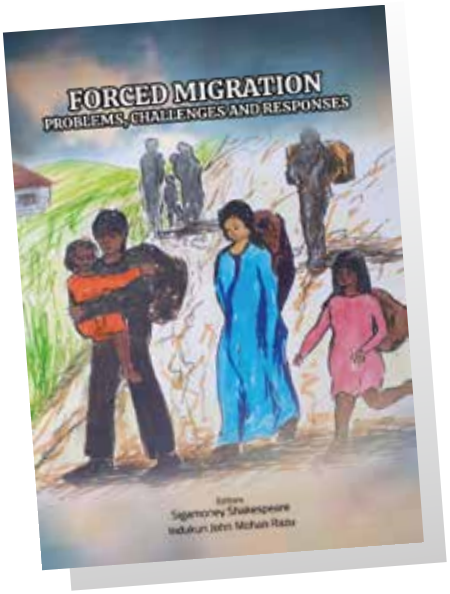
"Dalitekklesia: A Church from Below"

by Raj Bharat Patta

What is the locus, where is the locality and where is the location of the church in India today? These are the questions that this book "Dalitekklesia: A Church from Below" primarily engages with. The margins in India are nothing new, as most of the church and society are defined in terms of purity and pollution, privilege and prestige or principalities and powers, leaving a major section of people and perspectives as powerless and on the margins. This book's locus is on understanding God, church and theology from the perspectives of Dalits, who have been pushed to the margins for ages as they have been outcastes in the hierarchical caste system.

"Dalitekklesia: A Church from Below" offers a Dalit understanding of God as a suffering God, and offers the church as a church of the margins, recognising and acknowledging the agency of Dalits in this endeavour. The locality of the Indian church is discussed by bringing in the contextual social analysis of the margins, particularly discussing the locality as Peta, which is used for Dalit localities. The location of the church is defined by its public witness and therefore this book offers some perspectives in that direction of reimagining the church from below. The aim of this book is to engage in critical reflection on the very understanding of church from below, for the church traditionally has been understood as a hierarchical church running on the model of exercising power top-down. This book is an invitation for all those people who see the vision of a church bottom-up, where powers and principalities are dismantled. When all our churches become churches from below, the vision towards a new creation is possible.

Visit https://www.ispck.org.in/book/dalitekklesia for details.



"Forced Migration: Problems, Challenges and Responses"

Editors: Rev. Dr Sigamoney Shakespeare & Dr Indukuri John Razu

Forced migration is one of the crises of this century, which calls for practical solutions and theological responses. This volume precisely addresses the problems of forced migration and the challenges faced by people and offers theological responses. People trying to migrate to other countries drown in the sea, in sewage canals, freeze to death in remote forests; die of starvation after their vehicles break down in the middle of the deserts or their boat capsizes. While migrants are seen as a burden or problem, this volume offers a new lens to see migrants as potential agents of transformation.

Rev. Dr Sigamoney Shakespeare is a theological pedagogue and researcher. He serves as a Lecturer at the Global Institute of Theology, Underwood International College, Yonsei University and also coordinates the MTh programme (SEST) at the Graduate School of Theology, Hanshin University Korea.

Dr Indukuri John Razu is a professor of Social Ethics, author, and a social critic. He presently serves as consultant and research fellow at the ACTS Academy of Higher Education Bengaluru.

Visit https://www.ibpbooks.com/forced-migration-problems-challenges-and-theological-responses/p/58506 for details.

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