

COUNCIL FOR WORLD MISSION

INSiGHT

MARCH 2024

CARIBBEAN

AFRICA

EAST ASIA

Arctic Ocean

CWM Regional pre-Assemblies 2024

EUROPE

PACIFIC

South Atlantic Ocean

SOUTH ASIA

AUSTRALIA

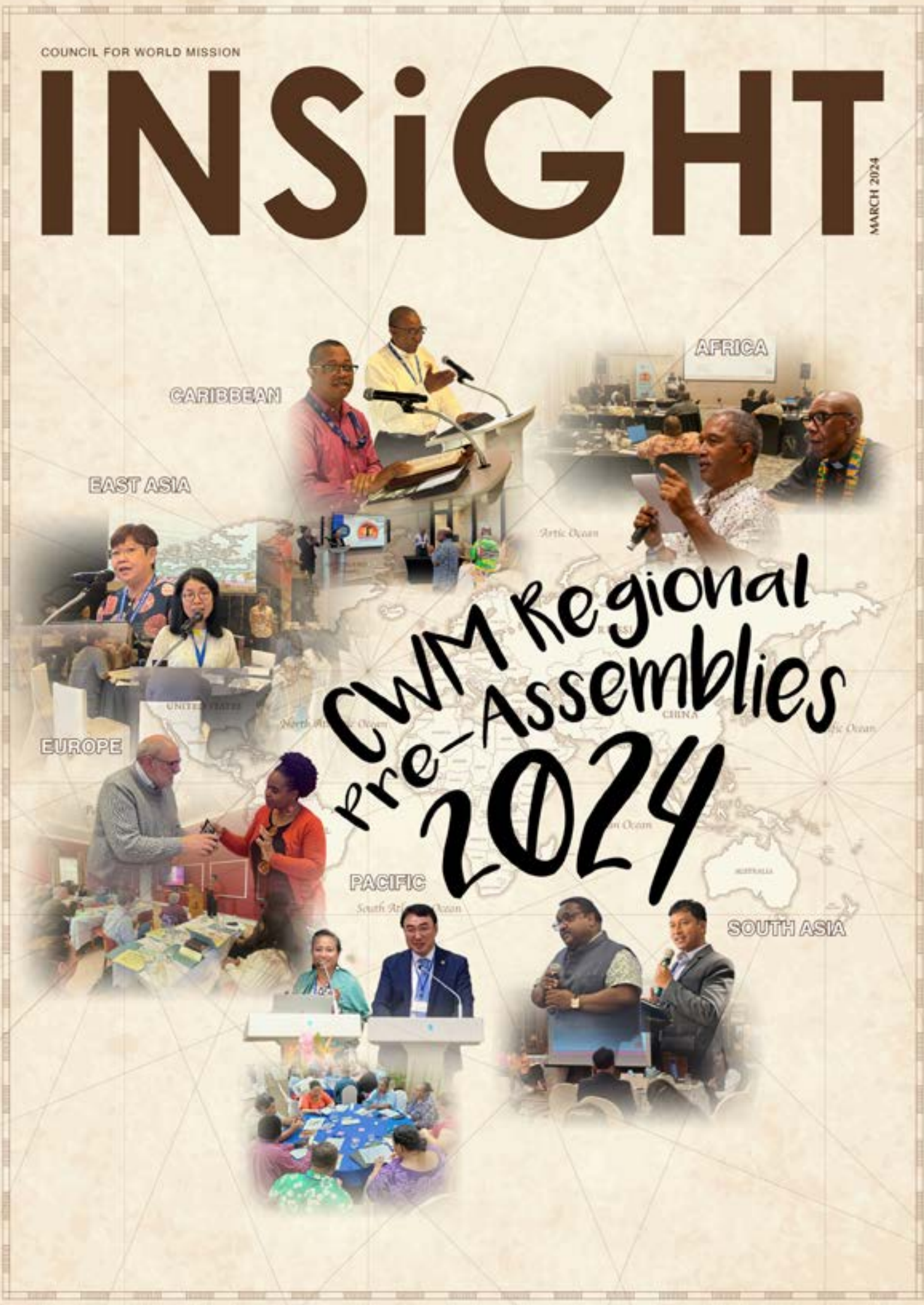
CHINA

Indian Ocean

North Atlantic Ocean

UNITED STATES

Pacific Ocean



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The cry for Rise to life by the peoples of the margins and all the victims of the vicious antics of Empire is our hope. Living against the logic of Empire is rebellion against the life killing order of Empire. Capitalism exists in a symbiotic relationship between racism, hiding in the husk of Empire that feeds on the paradigms of life Empire destroys and kills. By choosing the theme of its General Assembly, Council for World Mission declared its intention to resist the power of Empire. We are reclaiming our agency to liberate our lives and transform our world. The hope that sustains us in the context of Empire is the possibility to live in opposition to the logic of Empire. When we live out our faith rejecting the claims of Empire on our lives and our world, we witness the God of life. CWM believes that mission in the context of Empire is our absolute allegiance to the blossoming of life exposing and confronting the imperial forces of death and destruction.

The challenge before us is to re-imagine mission as developing life-flourishing communities, through the agency of the marginalized, in the midst of death and destruction. Mission in the midst of Empire is the Christian praxis of engaging in the public affairs of our times offering critiques, insights, and alternatives to transform our social relations, based on the vision of the reign of God. CWM, through its 32 member churches and Ecumenical Partners are committed to fostering life-flourishing communities. This is a new world where people can find spaces of belonging and new hope in their lives together.

This issue of INSIGHT carries the Keynote presentations of the six regional Pre-Assemblies. The African region focused on liberative questions of hope and decolonising the African Church towards embracing African cultural practices. It was also emphasised that "The liberating nature of the

resurrection forms the basis of the Christian faith, presenting a revolutionary event in human history and offering hope for rising from death to new life."

The East Asia region highlighted the critical need to address the climate crisis and advocates for a reoriented ecumenism focused on symbiotic relationships with all beings. The region emphasised the urgency of a new ecumenical approach in the post-pandemic era towards a transformative shift of ecological solidarity with every being on Earth as family.

In Europe the keynote underlines the importance of moral responsibility in recognizing historical wrongs, particularly related to the transatlantic slave trade and its impact on individuals of African descent. It further stresses the necessity of acknowledging past atrocities and making genuine efforts to strive towards justice, acknowledging the shared humanity of all.

The Caribbean region with its life and fullness depicted themes of love, vulnerability, interconnectedness, mutuality, and dependence. They further explored how individuals do not rise to life alone but rather together, emphasizing the significance of CWM's Assembly theme for all existence.

The South Asia region envisioned Transformation, as distinguished from reformation, and further embodies an ongoing movement of radical structural change driven by marginalized people, in contrast to the more centralized and often compromising nature of reformation. Further missional critiquing pointed to the need for dismantling exploitative and dehumanizing structures such as racism, casteism, sexism, xenophobia, capitalism, and consumerism. The theme of togetherness in transformation captures the spirit of Ubuntu, emphasizing interconnectedness, common humanity, and a counter-cultural ethos of sharing.

The Pacific Region highlighted that transformation is not to achieve perfection but a journey to be who God calls us to be. These Islands are leading in the struggle for a fossil fuel-free future, with benefits including health, accessibility, and economic independence. God therefore calls us to join the struggle for justice in advocating for support from the rest of the globe.

Throughout the regional preassemblies, we have thoroughly explored, examined, and journeyed to Transformation as characterized by an ongoing rejection of dehumanizing aspects of life. Together we commit to affirming the sanctity of life, promoting justice and peace.

May we continue to Rise to Life, Together in Transformation with our risen Christ.



*Dr Sudipta Singh
Deputy General Secretary
Programmes*

CWM Assembly 2024 Theme Expression

Rise to Life: Together in Transformation



Viewpoints

Rise to Life

In response to the challenges faced by the contemporary world, the Council for World Mission (CWM) is committed to Rising to Life! As a global community of churches, we ask the God of Life to lead us to abundant life through Jesus Christ. The 2024 Assembly prays for a life-flourishing creation and for communities where people can find spaces of belonging and new hope in their life together. The Spirit of God is moving, and the people of God are moving together in transformation.

Nowadays, CWM understands mission as mutual accompaniment. Mission as mutual accompaniment is distinct from the first period of mission under the London Missionary Society, which was primarily “the West to the Rest” or mission from the centre to the margins. Rightly, the legacy of mission from the centre to the margins provokes feelings of unease among churches (shame and guilt, often). Today, mission from the centre to the margins is renounced as a colonial enterprise (colonising peoples, minds, lands and spiritualities) in which the churches were sometimes complicit with colonial powers and racist ideologies.

Mission as mutual accompaniment is also different from the partnership of churches model. The partnership of churches model responded to the decolonisation processes during the later part of the twentieth century. Newly independent nations emerged, and a new architecture of international relations mediated by the United Nations set out a dignity and equality of nations. The partnership of churches model followed this new international architecture, emphasising the dignity and equality of churches. It moved away from the concept of “mission-sending churches” and “mission-receiving churches”. Instead, it recognised that mission is from everywhere to everywhere. Later, this would be interpreted as mission to, from, at, on and with the margins.

The partnership of churches model - mission from everywhere to everywhere – has served CWM well. It has enabled churches to work together ecumenically and missionally. It has encouraged churches to share their resources with each other through CWM and other ecumenical organisations and mission agencies. However, the partnership of churches model has tended to over-rely on understandings and practices of mission that place the church at the centre of mission, sometimes moving the God of Life to the margins. In practice, this has meant mission initiatives sometimes focused on sustaining the life of failing ecclesiastical structures.

Mission as mutual accompaniment challenges the churches to find ways to accompany each other in mission. Firstly, it understands the church as a response to God's mission. God initiates mission; the church responds to God's call to Rise to Life! Secondly, the church responds to God's mission by interpreting the "signs of the times". As such, mission as mutual accompaniment is not restricted to CWM churches accompanying each other in mission. Mission as mutual accompaniment is incarnational and Spirit-led. Building on understandings of mission from everywhere to everywhere, mission as mutual accompaniment "chants down Babylon and shittstems" and testifies to the God of Life and the Rising to Life to, from, at, on and with the margins. In the gospels, Jesus speaks "of the least of these". Mission as mutual accompaniment makes a "preferential option for the poor" – in creation and communities. It sees in the groaning of creation and the struggle of peoples the incarnate God of Life.

God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," made light shine in our hearts (2 Corinthians 4:6). Darkness cannot win over a spark of light in our hearts. Moreover, when tiny sparks of light move together, empowering, encouraging, and enlightening each other, the darkness of the Empire never wins over the light of God's people. The journey of CWM has been the journey to shine the light on Earth. Therefore, we ought to "Rise to Life: Together in Transformation!"

In response to the Spirit of God, CWM prioritises life flourishing mission in Creation, Economy, Societies, Spiritualities, Evangelism, Education, Church in Action, and Ecumenism. Mission work embodies the living presence of Jesus of Nazareth in a community of hope, healing, and liberation. In contexts where ideologies of supremacy breed gender-based violence, create sexual minorities, engender hatred and divide peoples into class, caste and racial categories, Jesus calls the church to become life flourishing in its expression, embodying a culture of inclusiveness, justice and peace. CWM encourages a spiritual renewal movement within the Church, where worship serves as a life-giving instrument for radical discipleship, hope in action and prophetic witness to life-flourishing.

CWMs theological statement (2020) announces Rising to Life: Breaking out of Babylon:

Based on the prophetic words of Isaiah (48:20), CWM accompanies communities living the urgency of the Risen Life on the streets, seas, lands and territories of Babylon (read Empire), witnessing the uprising of the Spirit as she brings into being the New Heaven and New Earth in our midst: at one with the God of Life in arising, shining, planting, praying, singing, dancing and embodying alternatives to Empire's death and destruction. CWM mutually accompanies people of all faiths and none. A spirituality of mutual accompaniment celebrates the "irruption of the poor", recognising the agency of creation and people making their presence felt on the streets, seas, lands and territories of Babylon. A spirituality of mutual accompaniment is an exercise of discernment (reading the "signs of the times") and of discipleship (an embodied following of Jesus Christ to, from, at, on and with the margins). Embodied discipleship can be fluid, fulfilled and faithful.

To this end, the Strategy Framework 2020-2029, titled Rise to Life, Confessing Witness to Life- flourishing Communities, has set the vision of CWM as a Life-flourishing Community. It emphasises that despite facing life-threatening forces, there is a growing wave of resistance, and many people are still dreaming of and working towards building communities of hope. Mission as mutual accompaniment joins the waves of resistance to Empire's life-denying forces. It dreams dreams and sees visions to, from, at, on and with the margins. It works towards building communities of hope through embodied discipleship.

CWM identifies with this resistance to the death-dealing systems and, more fundamentally, with the mission impulse towards a counterculture of hope. The "signs of the times" do not merely set our institutional agenda for the next decade but provoke us to action and prophetic witness (embodied discipleship). We are called to pursue a Spirit filled response to the "signs of the times", combined with radical and prophetic discipleship as we seek to celebrate and join the rising to life of God's creation and God's people.

For the CWM Assembly 2024, we respond to God's call to Rise to Life by interpreting the "signs of the times" through three sub-themes: Transforming Power, Revisioning Mission and Life-Flourishing Communities.

Transforming Power

The Onesimus Project (TOP) is CWM's concrete expression of mission as mutual accompaniment and an example of putting justice at the heart of our mission. The issue of the Transatlantic slave trade takes us to the heart of mission because the Gospel is the good news that encompasses every aspect of human life and society. Throughout human history, the issues of the slave system and human trade have been deeply connected to the development of Empires. Indeed, it is one of the worst forms of evil created by human greed. Unfortunately, the response of the churches and missionaries to the legacies of slavery has been too little and too late. TOP is a search for the right relationship in mission rooted in the equal partnership of the Triune God. It continues CWM's decolonising mission from the 1970s. CWM cannot speak of "partnership in mission" and "mission as mutual accompaniment" while keeping injustice in our midst. Justice is imperative for unity, and it demands radical transformation.

TOP has four major areas of work to transform power:

- 1) **Legacies of Slavery** - CWM affirms that human enslavement is a sin. Enslaving another is the highest expression of living life detached from, and denying, God's vision of the intrinsic worth and dignity of human life. African enslavement through the Transatlantic slave trade was supposedly made illegal in the 19th century. Yet, human enslavement remains at the heart of global economies today. The profits made from slavery continue to prop up the wealth and power of the powerful. This powerful minority includes the former colonial nations who continue to reap the rewards through their global corporations, monetary institutions, and local economic partners today. Our world and our institutions long for release and liberation from systemic sin.

The first act under the CWM Reparation Plan called for full formal apology. The healing process for victims and the descendants of the enslaved and enslavers requires as a precondition the offer of a sincere formal apology. This was officially and publicly manifested on 23 August 2022 at Bethelsdorp, South Africa. CWM is now being called upon to atone with reparatory justice for the role of the LMS and its participation in the crimes against Africans and their descendants. The reparatory justice plan calls for churches to repair, restore, and proactively engage in addressing the deficits.

The term reparation is used to embody the act of justice that is carried out to atone for the millions of Africans who were uprooted, stolen from their homes and families, and forcefully transported to and transplanted in the Caribbean and the Americas as the enslaved chattel and property of Europeans. The missional motif of the CWM call goes beyond the usual claim for reparations focused on unjust labour expropriation associated with plantation-based chattel slavery. Rather, restorative justice demands fullness of life being restored.

It has taken time to find consensus of the imperative for reparations in the CWM family because it is a controversial issue. However, for peoples of African heritage who were enslaved and never compensated for their inhumane labour pains during and after chattel enslavement including torture, lynching, rape, dismemberment, laws enforcing racial segregation, restorative justice remains an unfulfilled agenda. The focus of reparatory justice is the repair of past wrongs, and the purpose of reparatory justice is to vindicate rights generated by past wrongs to victims and the broader society. The different forms of reparations outlined in the UN Basic Principles include restitution, compensation, rehabilitation, satisfaction, and guarantees of non-repetition. According to the resolution, the purpose of restitution is to, whenever possible, restore the victim to the original situation before the violations of human rights or humanitarian law occurred.

- (2) **Modern-day Slavery** - Slavery is not an evil of the past. Long after slavery was officially abolished, the practice not only continued but thrived. Whether they are women in electronics or apparel sweatshops, children in brick kilns or on cocoa farms, or men trapped in bonded labour working on construction sites, millions of people globally are forced to become victims of modern-day slavery through coercion, intimidation or deceit. In a world of growing inequity and trade-offs between the haves and the have-nots, consumers, business and government are all part of the problem and the solution. While we have become accustomed to fast fashion and cheap consumer goods, the affordability of these commodities (value for money) often comes at the price of human exploitation. Demand for cheap labour to sustain the current model of extractive capitalism of the rich, climate change, human trafficking, and migration heighten people's vulnerability to exploitation. From poverty to gender discrimination and inequality, addressing the risk factors is critical to combating and preventing modern slavery.

Just as historical slavery was an enabling condition of industrial capitalism, modern slavery is an enabling condition of global neoliberal capitalism. Modern slavery deprives victims of their most basic freedom: to determine their own future. Any work towards fulfilling the promise of freedom should not only include the pursuit of justice but also a restoration of what was taken away. The aim is more than putting an end to this crime. It is also to ensure that survivors can move beyond their exploitation and live the lives they choose for themselves. CWM is committed to work to stop modern-day slavery of different forms through the engagement of member churches.

- (3) **Education for Liberation** - Christian Education and Theological Education find their purpose in learning to relate to/with Christ (Discipleship) and learning to serve as the Body of Christ, proclaiming good news and exercising vocational service in the world that Christ loves. CWM sees a core goal as the consistent and recognisable experience of *communitas*—where the transformative community is released, motivated, and empowered to serve God's mission.

CWM confesses that Theology and Christian Education have been used to enslave people and must be interrogated in order to release and restore the whole People of God. We see the need for querying and identifying alternatives. The inclusion of Decolonizing Worship (and Worship-leading) and Pastoral Practice (etc) responds to the understanding that Mission and Ministry Formation can support or subvert educational systems that manifest coloniality. It is in the perceived interests of the Academy to perpetuate colonizing modes and methods of learning.

TOP challenges us to review the very foundations of theological education and Christian formation, asking: if we engage Onesimus, how are the goals of education liberated, liberative and liberating?

- (4) **Transformative Ecumenism** – It is an expression of faith that is grounded in the mission of the triune God unfolding in the diversity, dynamism, and interconnectedness of the created order (Ps. 19:1). In its efforts to heal the brokenness of the world, it draws on Christ's presence in the experiences and visions of those pushed to the margins and on the Spirit's power expressed in the struggles against the forces of marginalization. This inspiration fuels actions and partnerships for justice and truth so that life in all its wholeness promised by God's reign is possible for all. Transformative Ecumenism asserts the dignity of every human being and the integrity of the creation. It announces that "the earth belongs to God" (Ps. 24:1) and invites all to be a part of God's dynamic of life. Pursued in the way of Jesus (Lk. 4:18–19), it is a spirituality that liberates the oppressed, upholds truth, nurtures peace rooted in justice, and inspires conditions for celebrating life. It challenges all homogenising and monopolising ideologies that destroy the "many-ness" of life in God's creation. It is lived out in every context of time and space to serve and equip one another for participation in God's mission. As an alternative vision of the future, Transformative Ecumenism inspires partnerships for justice and truth by anchoring itself in theological reflections and actions in solidarity with movements for justice, freedom, and dignity—especially for those on the margins and those in struggle against the forces of marginalisation. It asserts that the transformation of society must begin not according to the plans and schemes of the powerful and the privileged but with the visions and aspirations of those who are yearning for life (Mt. 5:6, 10).

Revisioning Mission

We are in Babylon, but not of Babylon! CWM challenges and re-envision the oppressive systems of the empires as life-flourishing creation, society, economics, politics, growth and advancement, knowledge, spiritualities, justice and peace, and witness. This is to assert how decolonial is the mission of God and how far into our lives and the world God's transforming love extends.

Gender and racial justice, dismantling patriarchy and creating 'safe spaces' in church and mission continue to be part of revisioning mission. Sitting at the weaving mat or under the shade tree, drinking from our own wells or playing with rosary beads and love letters in our pockets, revisioning mission is not limited to setting out more chairs to include more people, but rather asking: who sets the chairs and why?

Since the 1970s, CWM has been at the forefront of decolonising mission. Recognising its own complicity with colonialism, CWM converted to a "partnership of churches" model. CWM has renounced the unholy alliance of commerce and Christianity, of Western cultural impositions and deeply rooted racism in mission work. Today, CWM is guided and informed by its relationship with others in doing God's mission.

A first decolonising step was to value relationships, moving from away from a colonial approach and structure to a partnership in mission approach. Now, member churches have moved on from a safe and domestic partnership in mission model to a more radical understanding of mission as mutual accompaniment. Mission as mutual accompaniment speaks of shared pilgrimage, deep conversation, strong relational ties, mutual support, and shared commitment to advocacy and action. Disciples of Jesus are "companions on the road", bearing each other's burdens, walking together amid the disappointment, discontent and uncertainties of life. Mission as mutual accompaniment calls us to a long journey together, weeping and celebrating, learning from and with one another, helping all to achieve the life, wholeness and community that God offers.

Life Flourishing Communities

In the words of theologian Miroslav Volf, life flourishing means a life lived well, a life that goes well, and a life that feels good. This holistic vision speaks of socio-emotional wellbeing, as well as structural justice and the balance within creation. Through the ages, the Church has expressed this as 'the good life'. It is not human-centred but presents an interconnected web of life in a cosmic sense. Life flourishing sets out the Church's vision of 'the good life'. CWM interprets life flourishing as Rise to Life: together towards transformation. Miroslav Volf argues that Christianity and other religions offer compelling visions of life flourishing. CWM agrees! Volf raises a couple of questions that in the context of the CWM Assembly, we might set out as follows:

In what ways does Babylon (read Empire) impede or make possible love of God?

In what ways does Babylon impede or make possible love of neighbour?

Discerning the answer to these two questions – love of God and love of neighbour – is at the heart of CWM's vision. How do you respond?

CWM understands that there is an urgent cry for evangelism and radical discipleship in an age of personal disillusionment, social complexities, groaning creation and lack of faith in established churches. Returning to the basic understanding of Jesus' invitation for ordinary people to follow him, becoming like him "in wisdom, stature and in favour with both God and human beings" (Luke 2: 52); to bring the "good news" of shalom to those who lost their way to God; and to experience the life flourishing of mission is fundamental to CWM's vision. To reclaim this understanding of mission and evangelism is the basis for exploration and engagement with/of member churches towards new approaches to life flourishing witness, where spiritual grounding, wholesome relationships and transformative praxis are the goals.

Questions for Reflection

Where do you see examples of God's life flourishing in today's world?

How can you contribute to Transforming Power?

Describe some of the differences between partnership in mission and mutual accompaniment in mission.

Can you give examples of naming and denouncing Babylon (read Empire)? And can you give examples of times that you have risen to life with those at the margins?

Theme Expression Working Group

Prof. Kung Lap-Yan / East Asia

Rev. Sandisile Charles Xhinti / Africa

Dr Janneke Stegeman / Europe

Bishop Geevarghese Coorilos / Ecumenical

Rev. Patricia Sheerattan Bisnauth / Caribbean

Rev. Dr Graham McGeoch / CWM MS-Discipleship & Dialogue

Resources for further exploration

Council for World Mission *Mission Theology Statement 2020. Rising to Life.*

<https://www.cwmmission.org/download/cwm-theology-statement/>

Council for World Mission *Towards the Assembly 2024 Document*

Jooseop Keum (ed). *Together Towards Life*. Geneva: WCC Publications, 2013.

Miroslav Volf. *Flourishing*. Yale: Yale University Press, 2017.

Africa Regional Pre-Assembly Keynote:

Resurrecting Africa, the cradle of humanity



Africa: The challenges and opportunities

In undertaking the sacred task of resurrecting Africa to life, our point of departure should be understanding that Africa is not a homogeneous continent, and therefore should not be given a generic intervention.

It is a continent with different shades of culture, political dynamics, and socio-economic realities.

The common challenges faced by many African countries include violent conflicts, political instability, corruption, and lack of social services, including health and education, economic inequalities, and climate change.

We need to rehearse and remind ourselves that Africa is the Cradle of Humankind. We must evoke the great civilizations that have shaped the world to be what it is today. We evoke this not just for a pacifying nostalgia and paralysing sentiment. We do this to draw inspiration and forge hope towards finding sustainable solutions to the complex challenges that we face.

It is only when we understand, embrace, and internalise the radical hope of the resurrection that we can articulate the framework and agenda of a risen and transformed Africa.

The liberative nature of the resurrection

The theme of rising is so appropriate for us as followers of the Lord Jesus Christ. Our identity as Christians is founded on the greatest rising in the history of humanity which is the resurrection of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

It is the liberating miracle of the resurrection that birthed and sustained the Christian faith and movement that we are part of today.

Without the resurrection, the Cross of Calvary would have just been a major historical event without any power. It is the power of the rising on Easter Sunday that turned the scandalous Friday into a Good Friday.



The Christ that we worship is Lord and authority on the resurrection as he demonstrates this in the raising of his brother and friend Lazarus to life in John 11.

Christ's call defies mortality and calls Lazarus to life, and Lazarus responds and emerges out of the cold tomb as an exhibit of the power and miracle of the resurrection.

It is this Christ who goes on to afford the young girl in Mark 5, the gift of the resurrection.

Christ holds her by the hand and issues a strong compassionate command; "Talitha cum" which means; "Little girl, rise" (Mark 5:41).

A church that is engaged in the healing miracle and transforming mission is one that can call on the broken, downtrodden, and dying—if not already dead—Africa to come out of its tomb and to stand up and be counted amongst the nations of the world!

Rising to eternal life

The Christian version of rising is not just from a mere slumber. It is about rising from death to life and about new life that the dead receive.

Jesus said to Martha, "I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live, and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?" (John 11:25-26)

Do we then truly believe in the words and implications of the theme: Rising to life and together engaging in transformative mission, or is this just an empty conference branding slogan to be put on our conference paraphernalia?

Part of our theological responsibility in engaging this theme, is to exegete and unpack the theology and spirituality of the life to which we must rise. There are two important related concepts that Christ articulates that must serve as the primary motif of any mission enterprise.

The first is the famous John 10:10: "I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly." The second is the well-known verse, John 3:16: "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life."

Life is a central focus of the Gospel of John. We are to engage in mission that provides people with abundant and eternal life. Abundant life is about the quality of life which is shared prosperity. Eternal life is not so much



about the detached paralysing other world. It is about the sustained quality life for all that is experienced in the here and now.

Together in transformative mission

The second part of our theme captures the understanding and qualifies this act of rising to life. This is understood as being: Together in Transformative Mission.

Mission is a collaborative and communal enterprise that is undertaken through shared agency. It is a partnership of God with the church and its servants. It is a collaboration of different churches that are affiliated to this council. It is done through a sustained ecumenical cooperation of different churches. Mission is therefore an inclusive business that is undertaken in solidarity with the beneficiaries.

The call for Africa to rise from slumber and death includes the African church engaging in a sacred, liberating, and transforming process of decolonising the church and the Mission of God in which it is engaged.

We accept as fact that colonialism has long ended but we recognise that there are still lingering vestiges of colonial dominance in many parts of the African church.

Decolonising the African church will include reaffirming and reclaiming the authentic African cultural identity. This exercise includes embracing African cultural practices, restoring African agency, and defending the autonomy of our churches even without resources.

Leadership that transcends, rises

In all this complex work of God, leadership makes a difference. We need incarnational missionary leaders.

Leaders who are transcendent and yet immanent, able to climb the tallest tree to see the current misery that God's people live in and inspire them with resilient hope that contradicts their circumstances.



Bishop Sidwell Mokgothu

Caribbean Regional Pre-Assembly Keynote:

There is no me without you



In 1973, an American soul group, The Manhattans, released a song entitled "There is No Me Without You." The song captures the fear of one person losing the other who completes them. The absence of one person can leave the other incomplete.

The theme "Rise to Life: Together in Transformation" relates to the song. An individual does not rise to life by themselves. They rise together. To rise together takes vulnerability, mutuality, interconnectedness, dependence, and interdependence.

Origin of life

In Genesis 2:7, God breathes the "breath of life" into human beings. This is not the air in general but God's living breath.

Human beings were also created in the image of God and for life in relationship with God and the creation.

The five verbs of Genesis 1:28 – "be fruitful, multiply, fill, subdue, and dominion" – are not so much commands but authorisations by which we were empowered to believe and act towards the future.

In sum, God's approach to creating life is communal and relational. God works from within the created order instead of without. As such, the role of those created in the image of God is not power over or absolute control

and independence. The created order is not available for human manipulation and exploitation.

In other words, "each individual's humanity is ideally expressed in relationship with others." I am because you are (Ubuntu).

Tracing the concept of life in Scripture

In the biblical story, God's good creation got corrupted in the fallout of the Adam and Eve episode.

The consequences were tragic, of universal proportion and significance. Adam blamed God – "the woman you gave me" – and Eve – "she gave...and I ate." And Eve blamed the Serpent – "the Serpent tricked me."

From the story, Eve exercised her ability to act independently and make a choice for which she bears the blame for humanity's sin or loss of life in her relationship with God. Eve's story brought a fallout in humanity's relationship with God. Eve's fallout, though, is not original. Disobedience happens in a human's relationship with God.

Notwithstanding, the Old Testament stresses that a complete or fulfilled life can only be lived in communion with God. To experience life fully, humans must live with God and obey God's revealed will. Consequently, human life has an ethical dimension, with the covenant blessings of God ensuing from obedience and his covenant curses from disobedience.



Building on the Old Testament depiction of sin and the Fall, the departure point of the New Testament is that life is corrupted by sin, which results in death. All human beings are dead in sin and deserve God's eternal judgement. God, however, in his grace and mercy, has provided the perfect solution: he sent his Son to give his life as ransom, substitute, and example for the sins of human beings.

The New Testament states that Jesus counteracted the effects of the Fall at the cost of his own life. He suffered death so that his followers could be saved to eternal life. By the work of God, Jesus was resurrected from the grave, ensuring the justification of sinners. His death and resurrection constitute a new order of life, with his followers sharing in his death and burial to be resurrected spiritually here and now to eternal life. Consequently, Jesus reveals himself as the resurrection, the life, and the way.

He is eternal life.

While the new life in Christ is a present reality enjoyed by all believers, there is a "not yet" side to their lives. While they have been raised with Christ, they have not yet appeared with him in glory and struggle with sin and mortality. The complete salvation of believers still lies in the future, with the return of Christ and the consummation of all things.

This dimension of the "already" but "not yet" life encourages believers to persevere in obedience to God despite persecution and hardship, and strive to conform more to the image of the Son.

Life under empire

Empire was not a condition that facilitated interdependence and mutuality of human life. In the Roman Empire, news spread of Jesus who could regenerate their lives to what God intended in the creation from oppression, captivity, sickness, disease, demon-possession, dumbness, and blindness. God's intention in the creation is empowerment and wellbeing.

So, Jesus' mission was to heal the world of its illnesses and unhealthy subjugation to empires.

That ministry, though, cannot be understood and experienced apart from the social realities of the context that necessitated it. Jesus' healings and exorcisms were not acts of charity. They restored human life to empowerment and wellbeing.

The implications of life

God's creation is not presented as "a finished product" to be preserved as created. Humans created in the image of God and empowered for wellbeing were not called to passivity but to genuine engagement.

That calling must not only say what the reign of God is but also show that it stands against individualism as opposed to community, injustice as opposed to equity, ecological care as opposed to wanton environmental exploitation, and a dichotomous view of human physical and spiritual wellbeing as opposed to concern for the total wellbeing of every individual.

Conclusion

Human beings created in the image of God represent God's will in the world. What God wills for humanity is empowerment and wellbeing.

It is to rise to life, a transformed life in Christ.

Rise to life is within the context of community. Individuals do not live in isolation, apart from the community. Interdependence and mutuality are necessary to exercise, develop, and fulfil their individual and community potential.

Human beings are created in community, for community and cannot survive without community.

Rise to life is an invitation to being for others.



Rev. Dr. Oral Thomas

East Asia Regional Pre-Assembly Keynote:

New ecumenism and new faith community through theological reconstruction in the post-pandemic era



Faith toward the life of symbiosis

Last year, the world experienced disasters such as heat waves, droughts, heavy rains, and wildfires, as well as ecological destruction accelerated by wars and conflicts, all of which have created a sense of urgency that if we delay any longer, we may reach an irreversible situation. Humanity is at a crossroads: coexistence or extinction. The direction and choices we make here and now will determine the sustainability of the next generation. The question is not speed, but direction. Therefore, we need to reorient the ecumenical movement and move towards God.

1. A new understanding of ecumenism that can lead in the post-pandemic era

The first action of the ecumenical movement must be against the destructive forces toward the Earth. Not only humans created by God but also other beings are

our fellow creatures. Therefore, the new direction of ecumenism in a post-pandemic age, must seriously seek a symbiotic path with all beings and creatures on the planet earth in accordance with the will of God who still works faithfully for ultimate salvation. The important task of the faith community today is to construct a new ecumenism beyond the unity of church and church-centered ecumenism.

The word "ecumenism" derives from the Greek *oikoumene*, which originally meant "the inhabited world" or "inhabited earth." The word *oikoumene* comes from *oikos*, which means "house." House is the physical foundation of family. In this sense, ecumenism is about the earth as our house that we inhabit. The word *oikos* is also the etymological origin of "eco-," especially in our usage of the words "ecology" and "economy." Ecology is the system of the divine house, and economy should be the norm of the divine family. What is the divine family? What is the difference

between the divine family and the human family? One probably thinks of the Trinity when one hears of the divine family. However, we humans are children of God. Although the human family is formed mainly through blood ties, one should not forget that we are adopted by God. The Bible best testifies that Jesus Christ was the first fruit of resurrection and the first of God's family. After him, we, who have been saved, become God's sons and daughters, the family of God.

Therefore, what we need is not just an eco-friendly ecumenism, but a symbiosis ecumenism, from which we treat every being on this planet as part of our extended family. Romans 8 states that humans are not the only ones who wait anxiously for salvation; all creatures, the whole creation, living with humans, wait for salvation "with eager longing." This is a testimony to the fact that they desperately want to be saved and to be God's family together.

God became a part of the earth and a member of the earth's community of life by becoming incarnate in the flesh. From his birth, Jesus came out of a stable, the abode of animals, and compared himself to a lamb. We must not forget that salvation history is not only about the word, but the kingdom of God is proclaimed in relationship to the created world and the physical environment that is equally the object of God's love.

All life and creation on earth, whether visible or invisible to our eyes, are mediators of God's love. This biblical and theological reflection will lead us to a new stage of the ecumenical movement through perceiving human beings as intertwined with everything on Earth. Thus, new ecumenism for an "Earth Family" in God would argue for the equality of all beings beyond the anthropocentrism of the modern human and extend beyond community as church unity to earth ecumenism and cosmic ecumenism in the current climate disaster.

2. The true meaning of apocalypse reemerging after the pandemic

In terms of the ecological point of view, mankind has failed. Even in the face of the tremendous impact of pandemic disaster, ecological issues have received only minimal attention from Christians, and neither the church nor theology pays enough attention to serious warnings about the destruction of the ecosystem. One reason for this reality, would be a misunderstanding of the apocalypse.

We should recognize that the end in the Bible is not about a city of refuge, where we run away from the present world that is being destroyed, but about a country that will be inherited by those who care to clothe, and feed the suffering world and neighbours (Matthew 25). Thus, the current crisis can be solved not through the threat or insensitivity of the crisis, but

through the new understanding of the human, natural, and world and the hope for re-worlding (new heaven and new earth), which means a new world to be renewed through it.

First, we need to reflect on the fact that the Western theological tradition has viewed human salvation as separate from the world and nature. Salvation does not mean the separation of man from the world and nature. Rather, it is necessary to reflect on how God became a part of the earth by incarnating in a body and becoming a member of the life community of the earth.

Second, we need to reflect on limiting eschatological salvation to Christ's work for man alone. The Bible portrays, through the Old and New Testaments, that the cosmic Christ and Christ's work of salvation include not only humans, but also irrational creatures, material creatures, living things, inanimate objects, organisms, inorganic land, sky, rivers, seas, nature, animals, and plants, etc.

Romans 8:22 clearly tells us that all creation has been groaning and suffering together until now and that all creation eagerly awaits the Son of God (Romans 8:19-22).

Therefore, I propose a theology of the earth. We realized during the last pandemic that humans could never survive off Earth. However, as a saved people, we can choose to live in the same place differently.

Understanding this new relationship between the earth and humans helps us not to regard the Christian apocalypse as a catastrophe of the world, but rather makes us think about the meaning of the end in the present, and furthermore how to contribute to the re-worlding.

Earth theology is the work of revealing the divine presence that stays in the whole process of the entanglement of the world so that the possibility of a new heaven and a new earth is not diluted with an eschatological interpretation. Revelation is not about making all new things but making all things new.

3. Extending salvation through human-tech collaboration

The era of advanced science and technology, is causing fundamental shifts not only in individual or collective human activities but also in human thought as a whole, bringing about changes in societal and cultural norms and fundamentally challenging longstanding church activities, modes of faith, and the identity of faith itself.

For the church to fulfil its contemporary societal tasks, it is necessary to understand what technology means in modern society from a new theological perspective. If we acknowledge that God's history is not arbitrary but has God's will and direction, then even within the digital world of the Digital Earth, we can still discover God who continues to work even now. This is because God's love is not an abstract concept but dynamic in nature.

In modern societies, technology has brought significant changes not only in practical aspects but also in mental, emotional, and spiritual dimensions, affecting the interaction with media, human cognition, worldview, interpersonal relationships, and societal and cultural norms. In light of this, the church must earnestly contemplate how to interpret and respond to the radical technological phenomena brought about by advancements in technology within the lived world of faith.

Even in the wilderness of the Old Testament era, God's precise instructions regarding the tabernacle were expressed as aesthetic and religious responses through the technical characteristics of humanity. The tabernacle transformed into a sacred public space, a combination of human community and technological entities, enabling encounters and communication between God and the Israelite people. Throughout the salvation narrative of the Bible, humanity is never isolated at any moment; rather, its history always unfolds in collaboration with various cooperative entities such as the ark and the sea, the tabernacle and the wilderness, and the staff and the Red Sea, forming diverse collaborative presences shaping the narrative of salvation.

At the core of a theology of technology, the biblical interpretation of all things reveals that Christianity recognizes humanity as not being at the center and not solely responsible for shaping the world's transformation.

This interpretation is crucial in the process of reconciliation with God, as it encompasses not only humanity but also all things on Earth, leading to the realization of a new heaven and a new earth.

Conclusion

During Lent, we must realize that the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, Creator and Savior, are not just for the church and humans, but for the salvation of all life and the material environment, which is imbued with the intrinsic value of God. The real crisis, I believe, is not the decline in church membership, but the failure to turn around and eagerly seek God's will in the midst of this maelstrom of suffering.

Only by encountering God in all things can we find a way to live in symbiosis with the earth. The ecumenical movement now has the responsibility to move beyond solidarity and unity among churches toward coexistence with all things on earth.



Rev. Dr. UnHey Kim

Europe Regional Pre-Assembly Keynote: Moving forward together requires coming to terms with the past



My reflection today aims to connect the "together in transformation" part of the assembly theme with the ongoing, worldwide conversation about the legacies of colonisation and chattel slavery.

I will begin by discussing some myths that have led to our current status quo in light of these legacies. I will then address the fact that moving forward together requires sincerity, acknowledgement, and making amends along the lines of a kinship model of justice.

Myth 1: "Unconscious bias"

Often, "unconscious bias" is used to explain how people unintentionally harm others through sexism, misogyny, racism, and the various types of phobias and isms that exclude and dehumanise a society's members.

Within this concept, it is possible to perpetrate an injustice in some social relationships, while being a victim of injustice in others. Continuous self-reflection in relation to perpetrating injustice is always necessary.

Myth 2: God's favourites

There is a strong belief that the Bible supports the idea that a select group of people should hold positions of authority over all others. These preferred groups –

supposedly "God's favourites" – are believed to be a "model" for how others ought to act or look.

Jesus demonstrated an alternative viewpoint and openly showed concern for people who were ignored. For instance, we can observe how Jesus valued and validated the women and children whom He interacted with in Matthew 19:13–14 and John 4.

Myth 3: Injustice is inevitable

The various types of social injustices each have a unique starting point; thus, this means they can also have an endpoint.

Through many uprisings, protests, and liberation struggles in which women and men of faith together fought for justice, history has clearly demonstrated that change towards a more just society is possible. For example, during the last century, ecumenical resistance movements played a significant role in South Africa's anti-apartheid struggle. Similarly, faith and spirituality played a role in the case of the Malê revolt, also known as the Ramadan Revolt or the Great Revolt, in 19th century Brazil.

Moral responsibility

Moral responsibility, in the context of this lecture,

refers to the recognition of historical wrongs. It is the recognition and awareness of wrongdoings caused by an agent.

Acknowledgment

The system of chattel slavery did not happen that long ago; older members of society have grandparents or great-grandparents who lived in the time of slavery. The memories are there under the surface.

Acknowledgement recognises what happened during these atrocities.

In the same way, our societies can only course-correct or reform our way of living towards a transformed society that is just for women, children, and racially marginalised communities by acknowledging the truth of the past and its impact on the present. This is, at the very least, a moral obligation.

Sincerity in making amends

In light of current discussions across societies about gender injustice and the legacies of slavery and colonisation, we have come to understand that “sorry” does indeed seem to be the hardest word to say.

The concept of “apologies” remains controversial in many sectors, including among churches. I would suggest that this is, at least in part, because apologies, from moral (and other) standpoints, require responsibility and sincerity.

Public apologies are rarely simple or straightforward. They often have far-reaching consequences. In an article titled “The Promise and Pitfalls of Apology,” Trudy Govier and Wilhelm Verwoerd defined the various forms of apology:

- An apology as a form of defence
- An apology as an excuse or account
- A moral apology, which is an expression of sorrow for moral wrongdoing. The moral apology implies a request for forgiveness and is an initiative toward reconciliation.

Out of the three basic types of apology, Govier and Verwoerd opt for the third as being the most effective, as moral apologies relate most to “public moral apologies for serious wrongdoing.”

Kinship and the *Imago Dei*

I wish to conclude by sharing a theological perspective based on the phrase “ma se kind,” an Afrikaans language colloquial term that references those who are

regarded as family (biological or otherwise).

When you say to someone, “ma se kind,” you are sharing in their humanity. Theologically, we can liken this image to the term *imago Dei*; that is to say, we are all bearers of God’s image.

I would, therefore, like to leave you with this thought. “If we consider as *ma se kind*, all those who are oppressed as it manifests in gender injustice, discrimination, and racism, will there be hesitation any longer by all of the church and all of society to pursue justice sincerely?



Thandi Soko-de Jong

Pacific Regional Pre-Assembly Keynote:

The Pacific's journey towards Rise to Life



Towards a de-carbonised Pacific

In late February, I was at the Pacific Strategy Retreat for the Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty. We call for a fossil fuel-free Pacific as we are finding global temperatures increasing every year. Not only is there no reduction in global carbon emissions, we are seeing the production of more than double the amount of coal, oil, and gas than the absolute limit if we are to survive the climate crisis.

The 15 largest greenhouse gas-emitting nations are responsible for 71.88% of all annual global emissions, while the 14 Pacific Island countries are responsible for just a fraction of a percentage of annual global emissions. In September 2022, Vanuatu became the first country to publicly call for the negotiation of a Fossil Fuel Treaty on the floor of the UN General Assembly.

Tuvalu became the first nation a month later to call for a Fossil Fuel Treaty in the plenary of the UNFCCC at COP27. Nine of the 12 countries that have endorsed the call for the treaty are Pacific Island countries and two are fossil fuel producers.

As the Pacific Island Forum leaders met in the Cook Islands in November last year, the Ki Mua report was released to outline the pathways for a fossil fuel-free Pacific. The upfront estimated cost of replacing all existing fossil fuel electricity generation in the eight Pacific Island countries—Papua New Guinea, Fiji, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, Samoa, Kiribati, Federated States of Micronesia, and Tuvalu—ranges from \$691 million USD to just over \$1 billion USD. That may seem like a lot of money but it is only one-seventh the amount Australia gave to the fossil fuel industry in handouts and tax breaks in 2022-23 and less than one-

half a percent of profits of the world's top five fossil fuel companies last year!

Beyond the obvious positive climate mitigation impacts, a full de-carbonisation of Pacific economies will lead to benefits quite apart from the obvious climate mitigation gains, including in the areas of public health, energy accessibility and economic development, disaster resilience, political independence, and global climate mitigation advocacy.

A just transition must go beyond replacing one technology with another, and encompass a holistic approach to economic development in the Pacific, characterised by economic diversification, poverty eradication, decentralised renewable energy systems, and the retraining and redeployment of fossil fuel workers.

Global North nations must provide substantial climate finance and expertise sharing in relevant sectors. It also means not switching from extracting coal and oil from the land to extracting minerals from the seabed.

III effects of armed conflicts and legacies of slavery

When I attended the Etaratia Porototani Maohi Synod last year, I shared that so-called democratic countries are using the Indo-Pacific strategy to shut down processes of decolonisation and of self-determination. France has been using the threat of China to argue that Kanaky and Maohi must remain part of France for the security of the whole region—as they renew military alliances with Pacific countries using the bribe of funding for development.

Papua New Guinea has also renewed a military alliance with Indonesia as part of the Indo-Pacific strategy that puts Papua New Guinea as the gateway to Asia and on an arc that reaches to the Federated States of Micronesia and Guam-US bases. This will no doubt have implications on the West Papuan struggle for human rights, dignity, and self-determination.

The Pacific Conference of Churches will continue to engage on issues such as migrant labour, nuclear justice, and self-determination to support our member churches in responding to regional challenges in a transformative way.

We know that CWM has been very active in opposing the legacy of slavery.

As a descendent of peoples brought to the Pacific in the first enterprise of modern slavery—the British indenture system—I see the legacy continuing today in the Pacific labour mobility programmes that take our youths to Australia and New Zealand to pick fruit

and vegetables and work in meat production while our plantations are left unattended and our national economies become dependent on remittances from these migrant labourers, sportspeople, and warriors serving in the military.

This is the legacy of colonialism, despite the fact we had proposed a memorandum of understanding with the CWM to provide an avenue for partnership back in 2019. Efforts continue to be hamstrung by the emerging challenges of worsening climate change, hampered decolonisation processes, and nuclear justice matters. Rampant militarization; rising violence against women, children and marginalized communities; migration and labour mobility issues; and a proliferation of transnational crime have also created some gaps in our thatched roof that continue to hinder our rise to life together as the Pacific Household of God.

Yet, as a community of the resurrection, we know the power of transformed relationships.

May God's blessings be with you all as you worship, engage in fellowship, discern, deliberate, and develop your message to the CWM global community.



Rev. James Shri Bhagwan,

South Asia Regional Pre-Assembly Keynote:

A call to resist life-denying systems and Rise to Life



South Asia today

The South Asian region is home to some 400 million poor. About 30% of the South Asian population lives below the poverty line.

The Human Development Index of South Asian countries ranks very low. India stands at 132nd among 191 countries. South Asia's share of global poor increased from 27.3% to 33.4% between 1990-2013, leaving behind only Sub-Saharan Africa which accounts for 50.7% of the global poor.

The South Asian region is also particularly vulnerable to climate change mainly because of its varied geographical location and diverse climatic conditions. Urban cities like Mumbai, Karachi, Dhaka, and Kolkata—which together account for about 50 million people—face a high risk of floods.

According to Freedom House Index, South Asia is going through a democratic backsliding. This, of course, is in line with the current global trend where, for the 14th year in a row, democracies and civil liberties have deteriorated considerably. South Asia is, in fact, a region with a long autocratic tradition. Military and totalitarian regimes, theocratic systems, and authoritarianism are all found in South Asia.

Marginalization and persecution of minorities in various South Asian countries continue to be grave concerns. The recent violence in the North Eastern state of Manipur in India is just the latest example, posing serious challenges for our faith as Christians, churches, and ecumenical and mission organizations.

The Assembly theme of the Council for World Mission, "Rise to Life: Together in Transformation" does speak directly to these concerns.

Rise to Life

There are, at least, three different words in Greek that the Bible engages to refer to life in its various stages. "Bios" implies the given life is conceived as life at its subsistence level, whereas "psyche" is considered to be life at a slightly higher level than "bios."

"Zoe" stands for life as the Creator intends it to be. It is derived from the Triune God and represents a Trinitarian economy of life that fosters sharing, dignity, and justice.

When life is devalued, hierarchicised, and trivialised, it amounts to violation of the image of God and to rejection of the God of life. We are confronted by a culture of death and violence, itself manifested in various forms such as racism, casteism, patriarchy, market capitalism and consumerism, and persecution of minority communities on the basis of faith, language, ethnicity, sexuality, etc.

Achille Mbembe's concept of "Necropolitics" is helpful in making sense of the sweeping culture of death and violence with which we are confronted. According to Mbembe, necropolitics is a system where social and political power is engaged to determine how some people might live and how some others must die.

Necropolitics expose people and nature to mortal danger and death.

We need to develop a counter political culture, a “zoe-politics” or a politics of life that would resist all forms of systemic death and violence and supplant it with a culture and economy of Trinitarian Life.

Together in Transformation

Transformation is a crucial notion in theology and mission. Yet, it is rather intriguing that the concept does not make an entry in the “Dictionary of the Ecumenical Movement.”

The early church exemplified this missionary imperative of “transforming” by planting herself on the margins of society made up of mostly slaves, women, farmers, and foreigners—people who belonged to the lower rungs of society.

The early church had the moral credibility to confront the necropolitics of the then Roman empire, providing us with a model as to how Christians should take part in political life, and imparting a civic consciousness among its community.

Transformation aims at upsetting the status quo and turning the world upside down.

This was the mission that was carried out by the early disciples of Christ who were branded as subversives who turned the world upside down (Acts 17:9), that too in the matrix of empire, resisting and confronting it.

In a world where new incarnations of Caesar and new avatars of Herod are in power and control, our task is no different: to transform lives together by resisting and confronting empires of our times. Empires, evil systems, and structures cannot be reformed. They must be overthrown.

Mission as transforming lives together then would involve dismantling of structures that exploit, marginalise and dehumanise people—structures such as racism, casteism, sexism, xenophobia, capitalism, and consumerism.

Together in Transformation

The logo of the CWM Assembly conveys a different sense of togetherness in its theme formulation. It appears to capture the spirit of “Ubuntu” (“I am because you are”) which reflects our common humanity and the sense of interconnectedness.

The symbolism of the tree of life is profound here. The tree of life is a popular archetype that is commonly found in many religions and cultures. The metaphor represents the source of life and nature: God.

One could also locate the roots of a “theology of enough” here. The eschatological vision of the tree of life, as recorded in Rev. 22, once again reaffirms both the centrality and the agency of creation in the mission of God, in transforming lives. The tree of life is depicted here as the agent of healing for the nations.

This is particularly true in the South Asian context as we have already seen in the introductory section. The cry of the poor and that of creation is one and the same. “Rise to Life” is, therefore, an urgent call to wake from our slumber in the face of exploitation and injustice, and to stop being supportive, consciously or otherwise, of the systems of death and destruction of life.

In sum...

The Assembly theme, with its focus on transformation, challenges us to go beyond a reformist vision and mission, as transformation implies a revolutionary movement of turning the world upside down. It reminds us of the importance in ensuring the Trinitarian sense of “perichoresis” (interconnectedness) among God, humanity, and creation.

In short, the CWM Assembly theme is a call, as the Deuteronomist would challenge us, to choose life: “Today I have given you the choice between life and death, between blessings and curses. Now I call on heaven and earth to witness the choice you make. Oh, that you would choose life, so that you and your descendants might live” (Dt. 30:19).



Bishop Dr. Geevarghese Coorilos

1. Achille Mbembe, Necropolitics (Pdf) in Public Culture, 15(1), Duke University Press, pp.11-40.

At A Glance

CWM News

CWM Board adjourns with honed vision, plans for 2024 Assembly



The Solomon Islands played host for the first time to a Council for World Mission (CWM) Board of Directors' meeting held 26-27 February—the board's last in-person meeting before the CWM Assembly in June.

The Moderator of the United Church in the Solomon Islands, Rev. Armstrong Pitakaji, opened the meeting by extending warm greetings to the delegates. "The Solomon Islands are truly blessed by the work of CWM through the years, and we are ever grateful," he said.

Togetherness is Urgent

The two-day meeting was opened by CWM Moderator Rt Rev. Lydia Neshangwe, who preached from Acts 17:13-15, which tells the story of the separation of Paul, Silas, and Timothy during their missional journeys.

Neshangwe shared the fact that, while Paul was cognizant that the trio could do well while separated, spiritual transformation was only possible when they worked together.

"Believers in church may find themselves separated through various reasons like misunderstandings or diverging perspectives," explained Neshangwe.

"However, true transformation can only take place when we work together. Togetherness is all at once important and urgent."

She then drew a parallel between the story in Acts 17 and the theme of the upcoming General Assembly. "Therefore, for there to be a rise to life, let us be together to be transformed."

General Secretary's Report

In his report, CWM General Secretary Rev. Dr Jooseop Keum gave a recount of CWM projects and achievements, including the election of Neshangwe as the CWM Moderator.

She is the first female President to serve the All Africa Conference of Churches in its 60-year history.

Keum also highlighted CWM's continued support to the World Communion of Reformed Churches' (WCRC) justice desk for the renewed period of two years from 2024-2025, following a memorandum of understanding signed between the two organisations in 2023.

Part of the support will entail collaboration between CWM and WCRC on The Onesimus Project, Transformative Ecumenism, and Kairos Palestine.



Additionally, Keum reported on the upcoming CWM Internship Programme, which has approved three candidates. "The CWM Internship is not just another youth training programme. It provides mission opportunities for young people to gain experience in both mission and leadership development," he explained.

The Board was also informed of the conferment of the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy (Honoris Causa) in Theology to Keum for his contributions towards mission and theology, efforts in empowering youth and women, and promoting justice and human rights.

Gearing Up for the Assembly

As work for the upcoming Assembly in June continues to ramp up, the Assembly Planning Group delivered its latest progress report concerning delegates nominated thus far, the status of invited guests, and other logistical matters.

A detailed rundown of the Assembly programmes was presented to the Board who expressed appreciation for the preparatory work.

Proposals for Onesimus Funding Roll In

A brief update on The Onesimus Project (TOP) was made on the progress of member churches seeking funding. The funds include the Reparatory Justice Fund, Healing of Memories Fund, and Modern Slavery Fund. This follows the approval of funding guidelines at the last Board meeting.

The Board was also briefed on the upcoming Global Consultation on Modern Day Slavery in October 2024. The consultation seeks to evolve a CWM global strategy to empower and equip member churches in addressing country-specific concerns related to contemporary slavery.

Reprising Successful CWM Programmes

On the second day of the meeting, the Programme Reference Group gave an update detailing programmes that have been lined up for 2024.

Programmes that enjoyed success in 2023 are set to reprise this year including Training-in-Mission (TIM) which commences in May and A New Face in September. Meanwhile, the Mission from the Margins programme area will continue to focus on Social Justice-related programmes, including a Youth and Racism programme to be held in August in India.

Additionally, the Discipleship, Spiritualities, and Dialogue programme team will organise a programme on Spirituality, Politics, and Polity in March. It was also reported that TOP will be meeting in April to further develop plans for community development and reparations.

Farewell and Next Board Meeting

As the meeting concluded, the staff and Board present also bade farewell to Rev. Dr Sindiso Jele, who will be stepping down as CWM's Mission Secretary for Social Justice and the Africa Region in March.

The meeting was closed with a prayer from Jele.

The next Board meeting will be held via video conference on 23-24 May.

Assembly Planning Group (APG)

Meets in Durban as anticipation builds



The city of Durban hosted the Council for World Mission (CWM) Assembly Planning Group on 5-7 February to hone plans for an Assembly that will be a catalyst for transformation.

CWM Moderator, Rt Rev. Lydia Neshangwe opened the meeting with a reflection on the Assembly theme, “Rise to Life: Together in Transformation.”

With Romans 12:2 providing the backdrop of her sermon, Neshangwe challenged the Assembly Planning Group to “rise” and break free from worldly patterns and embrace a renewed and “transformed” perspective rooted in God’s will.

“May this Assembly be a catalyst for transformation, igniting a renewed sense of purpose and empowering individuals and communities to rise to life and be agents of positive change,” she prayed.

Locating the Assembly in Durban represents a meaningful decision for CWM, as southern Africa has endured and continues to grapple with challenges such as political instability, increasing poverty, xenophobia, and spiritual malaise.

The Assembly will serve as an integral platform for CWM delegates and ecumenical partners to engage in

meaningful discussions around these critical matters and share best practices, innovative ideas, and collective wisdom, so they can develop action plans for transformative change within their communities.

During the meeting, the Assembly Planning Group reported on preparations accomplished so far for the Assembly in June as well as progress made by the Local Organizing Committee.

The Local Organizing Committee printed of 2,000 colourful postcards which will serve as promotional materials during the CWM Africa Region Pre-Assembly. These postcards will be distributed to participants to offer a visual representation of the Assembly and its mission.

The Local Organizing Committee is also creating visually captivating and engaging environments for the locations where the various Assembly events will be held.

As the Assembly Planning Group visited the various Assembly venues, they also received updates from staff members involved in logistics, protocol, communications, and transport.

Towards CWM Assembly 2024:

Rise to Life with the Africa Regional Pre-Assembly



The Africa region held its Pre-Assembly from 8-12 February in Durban, South Africa—the first Council for World Mission (CWM) region to convene ahead of the full CWM Assembly in June.

In a welcome speech to the delegates, CWM Deputy General Secretary, Dr Sudipta Singh, described Regional Pre-assemblies as platforms for member churches to come together, share their experiences, and collectively discern emerging issues that impact their communities.

The pre-assemblies also provide opportunities for new members and churches with a shared history with CWM to join in the journey of transformation – a key motif of the CWM Assembly.

Africa Not Homogenous

The three-day meeting was opened with a keynote address by Bishop Sidwell Mokgothu, the District Bishop of the Methodist Church in Southern Africa-Pretoria.

“The hosting of the Council for World Mission Assembly in Durban...is an opportunity to position

ourselves better for the progressive mission agenda of the Council... [while] we must seek material support for mission, we must not turn the African church into a begging bowl that strips us of our dignity and agency,” stressed Bishop Sidwell in his opening address.

Bishop Sidwell also made clear his hopes for the region concerning the progression of missions in the continent—that en route to rising to life there must be, for Africa, an understanding that Africa is not a homogeneous continent and cannot, therefore, be given a generic intervention. He underlined the importance of collective prophetic discernment, collaborative partnerships, and contextual theological reflection that empower marginalized voices.

Understanding Power in Relation to Empire

Rev. Dr Lesmore Gibson Ezekiel, Director of Programmes at All Africa Conference of Churches, shared on the concept of power through biblical and secular lenses during the second day of the meeting. His presentation, “Transforming Power,” was a critical examination of how power intersects with empire, with its various manifestations and its potential for transformation or oppression.



Ezekiel analysed the complexity of power in Africa, pointing out its transient nature and its potential for misuse when monopolised by individuals or institutions, negatively impacting humanity and creation. Drawing from the Pentecostal account in Acts 1:8, Ezekiel contrasted the worldly use of power against that which submits to the Holy Spirit's empowerment. He emphasised the importance of wielding power that recognises God's sovereignty as one that will witness and fulfil God's mission against the global backdrop of poverty, racism, and militarism.

Revisioning Mission in Africa

One of the sub-themes of the 2024 Assembly is "Revisioning Mission" – a topic that was explored during the Africa Region Pre-Assembly. It has become necessary to critically assess how modern 21st-century socio-economic, political, and religious realities in Africa impact the understanding and practice of ecclesial mission. There is now a clear, urgent need for a mission approach that is locally defined, contextually relevant, and capable of addressing the life-denying conditions prevalent across the continent.

During the presentation on the sub-theme, the presenters concluded by calling for a new missiological vision that emphasises justice, peace, environmental

stewardship, and the creation of life-flourishing communities in alignment with CWM's strategic focus.

Local Immersion and Staff Farewell

The last day of the Regional Pre-Assembly presented an opportunity for local communities to interact with the global delegates via a service with the KwaMashu congregation of the United Congregational Church of Southern Africa. A lively, communal celebration of faith creatively put in practice discussions from the preceding two days.

The Regional Pre-Assembly also took time to bid farewell to long-serving CWM staff and community leader, Rev. Dr Sindiso Jele, who will be stepping down as CWM's Mission Secretary for Social Justice and the Africa Region in March.

Throughout his ministry that spanned more than a decade, Jele has been known for empowering communities, nurturing the faiths of many congregations, and strengthening bonds of unity within the African church. His leadership has been a testament to the power of faith in action, driving social change, and fostering a life-flourishing spirit of resilience and hope.

Towards CWM Assembly 2024:

Caribbean Regional Pre-Assembly empowers member churches to bring hope together



Fifth in a series of six regional pre-assemblies, the Caribbean Regional Pre-Assembly fostered unity, collaboration, and dialogue within its member churches – the United Church in Jamaica and the Cayman Islands and Guyana Congregational Union.

The three-day meeting, attended by 20 delegates from the member churches as well as ecumenical partners, was held in Kingston, Jamaica, 12-14 March. The Caribbean region is traditionally the home of liberation theology within the CWM family, and the pre-assembly reinforced this unique identity by maintaining and cultivating new communities where members are empowered to flourish, feel a sense of belonging, and bring hope through ecumenism.

"There is No Me Without You"

The first day's proceedings were opened with a worship session led by Rev. Dr Norbert Stephens and

the United Church in Jamaica and the Cayman Islands. They collectively extolled the church to never be silent to injustice, for to be silent, is to be complicit.

Furthering the worship message was a keynote address by Dr Oral Thomas, whose presentation drew parallels with the song "There is No Me without You," by the American soul group The Manhattans, to exemplify the essence of life in relation to others.

Speaking about life under empires, Thomas' presentation focused on the Roman Empire as it is described in the New Testament, and how Jesus' ministry of healing and liberation was part of God's redemptive plan to restore a sense of empowerment and wellbeing to marginalized groups.

He referred to the regional realities that the Caribbean peoples face such as the legacies of slavery, racism, and persistent poverty. The injustices suffered now do not invalidate the Christian belief of

God's promise of a fullness of life. Rather, he assured, the fullness of life has already begun in Jesus and will be experienced in the fullness of the reign of God. Life in a relationship with Christ, according to Thomas, is experienced before and after death.

Thomas advocated for a life lived for the benefit of others, while firmly condemning all forms of injustice and discrimination, and promoting the value of ecological diversity and the protection of resources for the wellbeing of all.

"In sum, God's approach to creating life is communal and relational," explained Thomas. "As an expression of God's love, creatures are invited into being for others. In other words, 'each individual's humanity is ideally expressed in relationship with others,' I am because you are (as described by the classic African concept of Ubuntu)."

Radical Inclusivity, Ecological Responsibility

Dr Anna Perkins, author, and researcher in the fields of ethics, theology, and scripture presented on the CWM Assembly sub-theme of Revisioning Mission.

Carrying out the mission of Christ lies at the heart of the Christian faith, she reflected, and it has become increasingly evident, while navigating the complexities of the modern world, that traditional paradigms of mission require re-examination.

"The Council for World Mission provides us with invaluable insights into this process of re-visioning, urging us to transcend conventional boundaries and embrace a holistic understanding of mission," Perkins acknowledged.

Identifying three areas where there is a need for transcendent missional work, Perkins named the radical inclusivity of women gender minority communities; empowerment of local communities by equipping and supporting local leaders, so that they can "become agents of their own transformation, catalysing sustainable change from the ground up;" and for the church to cultivate a profound sense of ecological responsibility over God's creation, to advocate for environmental justice and to develop sustainable practices that honour the sanctity of life.

Transforming Power—and the Power to Transform

Rev. Dr Stephen Jennings, a pastor of the Mona Baptist Church in Jamaica, explored how power was wielded by western imperialists to transform the very face of the Caribbean from its local population through genocides to even its ecosystem via enforced agricultural practices that led to land inequality.

Defining inequality as the dearth of options, opportunities, and outcomes for the local Caribbean people as a result of the legacies of colonialism, enslavement, racism, and classicism, Jennings called on the church to strive for economic, gender, racial, and climate justice, and to call upon and work with the powers that be to do the same.

He opined that while power can be used to transform people, people can also use power to transform their circumstances.

Jennings also encouraged the Caribbean church to embrace an ideology of planetary humanism, where the church pursues an interconnected relationship between all humans and the rest of the planet.

However, Jennings also urged that two caveats must apply: that the Caribbean church maintains a preferential option for the poor, and that the ideology must remain Christ-centred.

"We have argued the most pressing issue is economic inequality which has resulted in many ills, including violent crimes, forced migration, and societal fragmentation," said Jennings, who added that the whole church must transform itself to be better able to transform the prevailing society and systems.

"This will occur when the church examines, changes, and makes more relevant and potent, its ideologies and institutions, even as it seeks to engage the present issues," concluded Jennings.

Towards CWM Assembly 2024:

East Asia Regional Pre-Assembly explores mission that engages with all



The Council for World Mission (CWM) East Asia Regional Pre-Assembly convened 3-8 March in Bangkok, Thailand, drawing 30 delegates including ordained ministers, laypersons, and women and youth representatives from the six CWM regional member churches—Gereja Presbyterian Malaysia, Hong Kong Council of the Church of Christ in China, Presbyterian Church of Korea, Presbyterian Church of Myanmar, Presbyterian Church in Singapore, and Presbyterian Church in Taiwan.

The East Asia Pre-Assembly sought to celebrate the diverse gifts and contributions of regional member churches while deepening participants' spiritual understanding and collective purpose through contextual Bible studies and thematic presentations. The event also prepared participants for the upcoming CWM Assembly in June by outlining its functions, expounding delegate roles, facilitating election processes, clarifying logistical details, and the sharing regional stories.

Rev. Dr Jooseop Keum, CWM General Secretary, offered opening greetings, saying: "The global CWM Assembly will strive to foster life-flourishing communities where people can rise and find spaces of belonging and new hope together. We believe that the collective discernment and unity of God's people has the power to transform the world."

Relooking at Anthropocentric Ecumenism

In a keynote address, Rev. Dr Un Hey Kim, Professor at the Presbyterian University and Theological Seminary, Seoul, Republic of Korea, called for a radical shift in the global ecumenical movement towards a broader understanding inclusive of all life forms, as opposed to a church-centred approach.

She argued that even in the face of a pandemic disaster, ecological issues have received only minimal attention from churches as neither them nor contemporary theology have paid enough attention

to serious warnings about the destruction of the ecosystem.

Kim posited that one of reasons for this is the misunderstanding of eschatological teachings that positioned the apocalypse as an anthropocentric event.

Kim forwarded an alternative outlook that Christ and His work of salvation includes not only humans, but also irrational creatures, material creatures, living things, inanimate objects, organisms, inorganic land, sky, rivers, seas, nature, animals, and plants.

"We need to reflect on the fact that the Western theological tradition has viewed human salvation as separate from the world and nature. Salvation does not mean the separation of man from the world and nature," expositied Kim. She also added that it is utterly necessary to reflect on how God became a part of the earth by incarnating in an earthly body and becoming a member an earthly community.

"Therefore, what we need is not just an eco-friendly ecumenism, but a symbiosis ecumenism, from which we treat every being on this planet as part of our extended family.

"Paul wrote in Romans 8 that humans are not the only ones who wait anxiously for salvation; all creatures, the whole creation, living with humans wait for salvation 'with eager longing.' This is a testimony to the fact that they desperately want to be saved and to be God's family together," surmised Kim.

A Shift to a Poly-centric Mission

In the exploration of the sub-theme of Revisioning Mission, Rev. Dr Tan Yak-hwee, an ordained minister with the Presbyterian Church in Singapore, presented on the evolution of mission, from unilateral and unidirectional approaches to current poly-centric and poly-directional ones.

Yak-hwee dissected the history of Christian mission which had roots that were predominantly Eurocentric, hailing from Western cultural hubs like Rome and Constantinople.

However, the trend of Western-led forms of theological thinking and philosophy has undergone a paradigm shift in the last century with the explosion of Christianity in the non-western world and the corresponding shift of gravity of Christianity to the global south. This has had a profound effect on how Christian mission is being reshaped.

"Increasingly, there is a growing sentiment that mission is to be seen as a partnership that engages with everyone, especially those at the margins," highlighted Yak-hwee, who went on to illustrate the gradual rejection and decline of Western-led, "white-Protestant" missiological movements.

She also drew a parallel to this model of missional partnerships to the works that have defined the identity of CWM over the past decades.

"We look back to the historical formation of CWM in 1977 in Singapore when everyone could contribute and receive from each other as equals. CWM exists indeed as a global body to help in the resource-sharing for mission by the CWM partnership of churches," said Yak-hwee, who termed modern mission as "poly-centric and poly-directional—from everyone to everywhere."

She also highlighted the significance of recognizing the intersectionality of key issues such as racism and patriarchy in carrying out mission work in today's complex world.

Summing up her point on how intertwined societal issues and struggles are, Yak-hwee offered the audience her take that Christian mission is an endeavour that not only seeks to cut through the vestiges of colonial privilege, power, and oppression but also one that carefully considers the intersections of different social challenges and to work towards solutions that address these multiple issues, often at once.

To do so, Yak-hwee concluded, would require collective radical resilience and a faith-filled hope so that all life will be allowed to flourish.

Towards CWM Assembly 2024:

Europe Regional Pre-Assembly stresses decolonizing mission, moral apologies



The Europe region held its Regional Pre-Assembly from 19-23 February in Trefeca, Wales in preparation for the CWM Assembly in June.

The conference drew delegates from Congregational Federation, Presbyterian Church in Wales, Protestant Church in the Netherlands, United Reformed Church, Union of Welsh Independents and CWM Moderator Rt Rev. Lydia Neshangwe who came together to discuss shared regional challenges and exchange ideas, anecdotes, and insights.

The pre-assembly was also a critical platform where each nominated delegate from the region's member churches were given an important introductory walkthrough and orientation ahead of the CWM Assembly.

Of Shared Humanity and Ma Se Kind

Giving the keynote address was Thandi Soko de Jong from the Protestant Church in the Netherlands. An activist-theologian of Malawian-Dutch descent; she

is also a PhD candidate at the Protestant Theological University in the Netherlands.

Expounding on the social injustice that is the legacy of colonisation and chattel slavery, de Jong exposed the three biggest myths behind why former colonizing powers seem unable to account for their past misdeeds and how they justify their silence.

First on the list were unconscious biases individuals form that lead to social stereotypes about certain groups—biases often birthed as mental shortcuts that both dehumanise and exclude.

The second myth is the phenomenon that certain groups are given to notions that they are "God's favourites" when the Bible advocates equality. De Jong pointed out, "Jesus valued and validated the women and children He interacted with in Matthew 19:13-14 and John 4."

The last myth is the idea that "injustice is inevitable" which, according to de Jong, cannot be further from the



truth. She gave examples of many uprisings, protests, and liberation struggles in which women and men of faith together fought for justice such as the ecumenical resistance movements that played a significant role in South Africa's anti-Apartheid struggle.

While de Jong conceded that not all struggles have resulted in emancipation or liberation, she maintained that all these movements have served as a reminder that the pursuit to dominate and dehumanise fellow humans is ultimately a futile endeavour.

She also called for former colonizing powers to acknowledge their past deeds via "moral apologies" that entail requests for forgiveness and make sincere moves towards reconciliation through admissions of wrongdoing, promises to avoid previous mistakes, and offers to make mutually acceptable amends.

Alluding to the African philosophies of ubuntu and ma se kind ("my mother's child" in Afrikaans) that recognize fellow humans as one, de Jong connected these philosophies to that of "imago dei" or the Biblical concept that humans are made in the image of God.

"If we consider as ma se kind, all those who are oppressed through... injustice, discrimination, and racism, will there be hesitation any longer by all of the church and all of society to pursue justice sincerely?" she challenged.

Decolonising Mission

Expanding on one of the sub-themes of the Assembly—"Revisioning Mission"—was Luciano Kovacs, area coordinator for the Middle East and Europe from Presbyterian Church USA.

He identified himself as a child of an economic migrant and a refugee. Thus, the work that is missions from the margins as he supported refugees and asylum seekers struck a deep chord with him.

Kovacs shared how vital it was to truly remove mission from its Western roots, decenter Western Christianity and allow the displaced and dispossessed to speak for themselves and to lead the charge of the global church to be the repairer of the breach between the estranged communities and states.

Referencing both the ongoing Russian-Ukraine and Israel-Palestine armed conflicts, Kovacs gave vivid examples of how inequality and injustice have been inflicted upon and how vastly different the fates of refugees from both wars were.

Whilst white European Ukrainian refugees were almost immediately absorbed by their neighbours, brown-skinned refugees from embattled Gaza do not share the same privilege, which Kovacs strongly condemned.

He also shared many instances of church-led reconciliatory movements in Europe and the Middle East that have proven to local governments that it is neither rocket science nor impossible for the lives of the displaced and asylum seekers to be preserved through the active pursuit of humanitarian corridors.

Echoing the keynote from de Jong, Kovacs also shared that "the understanding of what a renewed mission would look like was not exclusively sending mission coworkers to support local projects, providing grants to local programs, and building mutual partnerships to walk in faith together—but to reckon with the historic responsibility."

Indeed, according to Kovacs, revisioning mission truly means confronting the past to build a more just present and future.

"Now it is the time [for colonising powers] to step away from the driver's seat, renounce being the center of mission, and recognize that the leaders of mission are the dispossessed, not the heirs of those who dispossessed them."

Towards CWM Assembly 2024:

Pacific Regional Pre-Assembly names climate change, ecological justice as top concerns



The ten member churches of the Council for World Mission's (CWM) Pacific region held their Regional Pre-Assembly from 29 February to 2 March in Nadi, Fiji, part of a series of regional meetings ahead of the CWM Assembly in June.

In his greeting to the Pacific delegates, CWM General Secretary Rev. Dr Jooseop Keum outlined the troubling scenario of a Pacific that has its waters, homes, and ways of living gradually encroached by empire through colonisation, marginalisation, oppression, and environmental disregard that have resulted social injustices and ecological crises. The silver lining, however, is that Christians know that those do not have the last word.

"The whole world is yearning for Christian love and a new hope, and I believe that hope in Jesus Christ can save the troubled world today," surmised Keum.

Ecological Injustice and Climate Change

Rev. James Bhagwan, General Secretary of the Pacific Conference of Churches, gave the opening keynote address.

He identified the current drive of the Pacific churches in being more "just in their approaches, ensuring that God's household in the Pacific receives justice through sufficient employment, responsible leadership, and efficient use of resources."

He also commended the churches' efforts in attempting to reduce the financial burden on members by converting precious island land to projects which benefit the people.



Yet despite the best efforts of the Pacific churches, Bhagwan nevertheless highlighted the concerning reality that empire still has its claws dug deep into the region.

“Our communities have been turned into marketplaces [by] colonizing legions which prevent the transformation of our people into their authentic selves in Christ,” condemned Bhagwan.

“The Australian, UK, US, or the AUKUS Pact... ignores the burden of responsibility for the impacts of their nuclear testing legacy; ignores the need to mitigate the causes of climate change; ignores the impact of labour mobility schemes on families, communities, and national development while at the same time targeting our forests and oceans for corporate capture disguised by green and blue language.”

He also revealed the various life-denying machinations by the global north that seek to stymie decolonisation efforts in the Pacific by using regional security and climate crises as pretexts to continue to put certain Pacific nations under their thrall.

Bhagwan’s critical take on the callousness displayed by the powers of empire went on to undergird many of the messages that would be shared during the pre-assembly related to climate injustice inflicted on the Pacific region, as well as how rampant climate change constitutes a growing existential threat to various island nations.

Unwilling Eco-victims of Empire

Echoing Bhagwan’s earlier points on ecological injustice was Pastor Hinatea Marotau of the Protestant Maohi Church.

She directed the attention of the delegates to nuclear testing by the French for three decades from 1966 to 1996 in the waters of Maohi Nui—testing which still has adverse effects on the ecosystem to this day.

In fact, the West continues to use the Pacific to test its nuclear capabilities, as exemplified in the Marshall Islands, this time by the US.

Adding to the woes of the region was the recent decision by Japan to dump radioactive waste from the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant into the waters of the Pacific.

This was an acrimonious move as the Pacific nations view Moana Nui a Hiva (the Pacific Ocean) as not just part of their living space, but also a sprawling territory that defines their identity, culture, spiritualities, and history – all of which continue to fall prey to the cruelty of Western colonialism and capitalism.

Labelling the urgency to mitigate the terrifying effects of climate change on the Pacific communities as a global concern was Dr Maina Talia, a Tuvaluan politician and climate activist.

Referencing the parable of the Good Samaritan, he revealed a twist to how the parable could be unpacked.



While the priests who hurried past the hurt man on the road to Jerusalem were concerned about their religiosities, the Samaritan, a historical enemy of the Jews, placed the dying man’s need above his own by asking the more important question: what would happen to the man if I do not help him?

Jesus’ message, Talia said, is to go beyond the confines of religion so that life can flourish in a way that aligns with God’s vision.

“Similarly, if I do not stop to help Tuvalu and other low-lying areas, what will happen to them?” challenged Talia, who stressed the importance of not allowing ethnic prejudices and rivalries to blind us to ethical duties.

In recent decades, locations such as Tuvalu, Kiribati, and the Marshall Islands are threatened by the prospect of disappearing under the ocean due to rising sea levels. Many on Tuvalu have even migrated to nearby countries, signalling the possibility that Tuvaluans may be the world’s first climate refugees. Talia expressed disappointment that the ongoing international debate on the fate of the Pacific islands was not on the lives of its people, but on the preservation of economic gain and benefits.

He accused the world’s capitalistic system of continually exploiting the Pacific’s natural resources, keeping their peoples poor and the islands underdeveloped to siphon wealth to the world’s elite minorities.

He decried the never-ending pursuit of capitalistic gain, GDP, and the promotion of the self as the roots of evil that have strangled—and continues to strangle—the Pacific and exacerbate climate change, a phenomena that no other people on Earth would feel more keenly than those from the Pacific islands.

“The church must be seen as an institution that provides hope and support to victims of the global economic system,” urged Talia, who cautioned the audience to not be like the environmental activists who call for all kinds of ecological reforms but stop shy of condemning wanton capitalism: all bluster but no teeth.

Going back to the actions of the Samaritan who was fully cognizant of the fact that he might be excommunicated by his community for helping a Jew, yet still did it anyway, Talia drove home his message that while actionable love reflective of God involves costly decisions, yet it is a love that the world needs the most now, when it comes to saving the Pacific.

“Do not be like the Levite priests whose neutrality to the man’s sufferings only serves to uphold the status quo. Until there is a radical reorganisation of the world’s economic system that continues to rob and rape Mother Earth, we will not find the answers to the prevailing questions created by climate change.”

Rebuilding of Life-Flourishing Communities is God’s Calling

Closing the three-day pre-assembly, Keum shared with the delegates: “Communal life is the life that is revealed by God who Himself lives in perfect unity with the Holy Spirit and Jesus.” He went on to also remind the delegates that the idea of a flourishing community must also include the rest of creation, an area that is often overlooked in mission.

“Rebuilding communities is the heart of the Christian mission—and not just global communities but local ones that will mutually support each other and, in the context of the Pacific, allow all lives to flourish.”

Towards CWM Assembly 2024:

South Asia Regional Pre-Assembly challenges systemic inequality and injustice



The South Asia Regional Pre-Assembly, the last of six regional conferences held ahead of the Council for World Mission (CWM) General Assembly in June, drew delegates from four CWM South Asian member churches in Bangalore, India, from 18-22 March to encourage and challenge each other to envision a new heaven and a new earth where all of God's people dwell together in fostering life-flourishing communities.

The delegates—representatives from Church of Bangladesh, Church of North India, Church of South India, and Presbyterian Church of India—explored channels through which they could deconstruct oppressive systems, confront societal divides, and promote regional ecumenical unity and reconciliation.

CWM General Secretary Rev. Dr Jooseop Keum welcomed the delegates to engage and creatively “Rise to Life: Together in Transformation,” the theme of the upcoming June General Assembly. He further highlighted the importance of gender justice and the prevention of gender-based violence as an agenda for

the church's mission in Asia.

In spite of the challenges, Keum exhorted the audience to take heart that, as a community of churches in mission, they must continue to sing a song of hope in the midst of tribulation.

Challenge Oppression and Injustice

Bishop Dr Geevarghese Coorilos, from the Malankara Jacobite Syriac Orthodox Church and a renowned missiologist, gave a keynote address reflecting on the General Assembly theme.

His presentation offered insights into the multi-layered challenges facing South Asia, ranging from extreme inequality and injustice, with a significant portion of the population living in poverty, to the grave threats posed by climate change, such as rising sea levels and increased migration due to environmental disasters. He highlighted how systemic forces like casteism, sexism, and xenophobia contribute to a pervasive culture of death and violence, challenging



the very essence of human dignity and democratic values.

Defining the differences between transformation and reformation, Coorilos urged an increased, intentional transformational response by embodying a life-centric ethos. He also emphasised the theological and moral imperative to cherish and advocate for life in all its forms while criticizing existing structures of oppression. He called for a radical, transformative mission that aligns with the principles of love, justice, and interconnectedness.

“In a world where new incarnations of Caesar and new avatars of Herod are in power and control, our task is no different: to transform lives together by resisting and confronting empires of our times. Empires, evil systems, and structures cannot be reformed. They must be overthrown,” he declared.

Coorilos also pointed out that the Assembly theme of “Rise to Life: Together in Transformation” is presented as not only a theological reflection but also a practical call to action against the culture of death and for a Trinitarian political economy that promotes sharing, equality, and ecological integrity, challenging the destructive forces of neoliberal capitalism.

This rallying cry, according to Coorilos, advocates for an urgent wakeup call to address global threats, and affirms the agency of marginalized communities and creation itself, encouraging a collective movement towards a more just, equitable, and life-affirming world.

A Look at Power

Rev. Dr Allan Palanna, a lecturer in the Department of Theology and Ethics of the United Theological College in Bangalore, India, delved into the Assembly sub-theme “Transforming Power” by emphasising

the character and societal impacts of power in global contexts.

He referenced The Accra Confession and Allan Boesak's insights on the life-denying, enslaving power of open market dynamics.

Palanna noted the historical shifts in Christianity's power dynamics and highlighted the influence of power in Christian communities, along with the reimagining of power as a source of restoration and regeneration.

He also reflected on the roles of biblical ambassadorship, the cost of being an ambassador for Christ, power conflicts among the Apostles, and healing power conflicts.

Palanna noted the importance of transformative power principles, the ethical alternative of God's reign, resisting power irrelevance, and the impact of social media on communication.

“The Word forever challenges faith communities to identify moral and ethical gaps in the use of power, re-imagine power as an instrument of God, and resist attempts to make power irrelevant to the cries of the most vulnerable communities and the earth and as Aruna Roy once remarked, ‘so that power will be more truthful and truth will have more power,’” concluded Palanna.

Rev. Samuel Mall, an assistant professor in Christian Theology, spoke on another Assembly sub-theme, “Building Life-Flourishing Communities.”

Mall placed an emphasis on the urgent need for communities to embrace inclusivity, ecological responsibility, and solidarity against a backdrop of rising religious nationalism and ecological crises.

He raised discussions that highlighted the importance of extending life-flourishing communities beyond humanistic scopes to also include nature, reflecting on the water crisis as a vivid example of ecological neglect.

The South Asia Regional Pre-Assembly also touched on the historical and ongoing impacts of partitions, such as those of India and Palestine, underscoring how religion and British colonial policies have long fueled division and conflict.

Mall critiqued the internal challenges faced by churches in India, such as the Church of North India's struggle with caste discrimination and the impacts of globalization on marginalized communities like the Dalits.

He called for a rejection of exclusive religious claims and for embracing a spirituality that actively participates in the liberation and support of the oppressed, advocating for partnerships that transcend religious, cultural, and sexual boundaries as a counter to oppressive ideologies like Hindutva.

Challenges to Democracy

A key highlight of the regional pre-assembly was "Challenges of Democracy in South Asia," a public event that brought together over 100 members that engaged and discussed the various challenges to democracy within the South Asian context and the world.

Presenters urged churches to come together and provide resistance through commitment and action. Speakers also espoused that reality that the church has always been the agent for social change within many regions of the world.

CWM delegation visits Honiara churches in Solomon Islands



In conjunction with a Council for World Mission (CWM) Board of Directors meeting, a CWM delegation visited four local churches that are part of the Honiara Circuit in the Solomon Islands—Kukum United Church, Naha United Church, Lugavatu United Church, and Wesley United Church—on 25 February. There, they joined in worship services with the local congregations, forging new friendships and renewing existing ties.

The Wesley United Church's service was a unique experience for the attending CWM staff members as the sermon was also broadcast over the national radio network, an effective avenue for God's word to reach the local populace who may live in remote or inaccessible locations.

The Wesley United Church is part of the United Church in the Solomon Islands, a governing body that originated as the other half of the former United Church in Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands. The United Church in the Solomon Islands became autonomous in 1996.

Letting Down the Net on the Right Side

CWM General Secretary Rev. Dr Jooseop Keum preached to a packed sanctuary on readings from Leviticus 25:8-10 and John 21:5-13.

Expressing solidarity with the local population whose livelihoods are still very much based on agrarian practices and fishing, Keum centred his message on the story of Peter, a disciple of Christ who was also a skilled fisherman.

John 21 details the poignant story of Peter and the disciples who went on a failed fishing trip after the Jesus' death, but came away with a full catch after heeding the instructions of the risen Christ who stood by the shore.

Using the story as a springboard, Keum challenged the congregation to think about what they might be missing when things go wrong in their lives, especially in areas over which they thought they had control.



“While we are equipped with many things to be successful in our ministries, are we truly experiencing the guidance of God in our lives?” asked Keum.

He drew attention to God’s commission to make disciples and to “fish for men” and the fact that, even though the disciples in the story were trained fishermen since birth, they still willingly let down their nets on the instruction of Christ.

Willingness and obedience were the keys to the success that the fishermen ultimately enjoyed.

This obedience can be further magnified as the church embarks on its mission to live out God’s vision of the new world, and to fulfill its role as a herald of the year of Jubilee that was also referred to as the year of the Lord’s favour when salvation and deliverance were given to all and when debts were written off.

“The church is to be a foretaste of the Kingdom of God,” said Keum, who exhorted the church to be the bearer of the good news, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and to set free the oppressed.

Mission, according to Keum, is a divine command that comes straight from God.

As the earlier story of Peter’s failed evening of fishing turned into a morning that restored his relationship with God, so it must be with the church as it regains and holds fast to its calling to feed the Lord’s sheep—a promise that Peter reiterated thrice as Jesus reaffirmed his commitment to and love of Him on the shores of Galilee.

“Just before Jesus fed the multitudes, the disciples were asking how they could feed the throng. Jesus replied simply with ‘you give them something to eat,’ signifying that mission is the job of the church,” recounted Keum, “when the disciples replied that they only had five loaves and two fishes, he performed the famous miracle that fed the thousands.

“Jesus can and will always multiply our lives and gifts, no matter how small they may be, in service of Him,” added Keum. “The question is: are we willing to love His sheep like Peter did?”

Two new partners join CWM PIM programme in 2024

INTRODUCING CWM Partners in Mission WELCOME TO THE TEAM!



Prof. Disraeli Hutton
International University of the Caribbean
Dean for Graduate Studies, Research & Consultancy
Sending Church: Caribbean And North America Council For Mission (CANACOM)



Jacob Zikuli
Tangintebu Theological College Kiribati
Project and Policy Manager
Sending Church: United Church in the Solomon Islands

The Council for World Mission (CWM) warmly welcomes two new members joining the Partners in Mission (PIM) programme.

The new partners bring with them a wealth of experience in helping PIM establish life-flourishing communities around them.

Joining in January 2024 was Prof. Disraeli Hutton, who will be serving at the International University of the Caribbean as dean for Graduate Studies, Research, and Consultancy.

Hutton has a wealth of experience in academia which is well-suited for this PIM partnership intended to aid the university in accomplishing its vision of academic excellence, peace-building, and community development.

As the Dean, Hutton will have teaching and research responsibilities, as well as administrative duties. Hutton will be responsible for educational and research activities of the academic faculties and oversight of the university’s research portfolio with a focus on the administration of graduate and postgraduate research.

Commencing his service in April 2024 will be Jacob Zikuli who joins The Tangintebu Theological College in the capacity of Project and Policy Manager, bringing with him project implementation and management skills essential in working with the college to implement and drive initiatives with the intent to restructure the college to a level that matches regional and international standards in a rapidly changing academic landscape.

The PIM programme would like to thank the Caribbean and North America Council for Mission and the United Church in the Solomon Islands for their support in sharing their human capital and skills with the wider CWM communities.

“The Partners in Mission programme aims to foster ecumenical and collaborative work among CWM member churches and partner organizations. Our goal is to enable life-flourishing communities by sharing resources, people, and skills as partners in God’s mission, both globally and locally,” said Rev. Sim Joo Yee, CWM Mission Secretary for Mission Programme and Partnership, East Asia and South Asia.

At A Glance

Member Church News

Zambian Youth Day Weekend: Getting Zambian youth more engaged in church work



Youth Day in Zambia is celebrated on 12 March each year. Marked with various events, including parades, cultural performances, and discussions on youth issues, it is a day dedicated to recognizing and celebrating the contributions and potential of young people in the country.

The Youth Day weekend from 16-17 March saw many youths getting bloused and jacketed as members of the Fellowship of Youth in the Uniting Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa.

The Fellowship of Youth in Zambia held pulpit exchange on 10 March when youths from one

congregation were sent to another to lead the liturgy as well as preach.

Some congregations hosted outdoor events to encourage youth involvement in church activities.

The Fellowship of Youth was also given an opportunity to participate in the Faith Clinic which is the initiative of the Fellowship of Men in Munali Presbytery as part of the youth month.

CWM celebrates Church of Bangladesh's jubilee year, bicentenary of St Thomas' Cathedral



March is a significant month for the Church of Bangladesh as it celebrates its 50th anniversary. The Church of Bangladesh is a united Protestant church comprising mainly the Anglican and Presbyterian denominations.

As part of the festivities from 1-2 March, St Thomas' Cathedral—a cornerstone of faith and history in the heart of Dhaka, and a central landmark in Bangladesh's Christian landscape—also commemorated its bicentenary since its inauguration on 10 July 1824.

The Church of Bangladesh and her member churches continue to play important roles in partnership with the Council for World Mission (CWM) in driving missiological change, challenging systemic oppression, and establishing life-flourishing communities in a country threatened by the flames of rightwing nationalism fanned by religious fundamentalists.

CWM Deputy General Secretary-Programmes, Dr Sudipta Singh gave greetings during the event that was held at the Retreat Prayer Garden in Savar, Dhaka. The joyous occasion was witnessed by a diverse group of delegates and guests, including mission partners, bishops, former bishops, synod secretaries, ecumenical partners, organizational friends, clergy, deanery representatives, and institutional heads.

Singh reminded the audience of the seeds of faith that were sown by the early missionaries who helped the local population find, in Jesus, a God who suffers with them and who empowers them to reclaim their lost humanity and to celebrate their identities.

"Jubilee is the opportunity to envision the Church of Bangladesh as the servant leader of the communities and to witness prophetically and relevantly in our times. That requires the creative imagination to develop new



ministries that will bring healing and transformation in your grassroots and eventually, the nation,” exhorted Singh.

Identifying youth as the lifeblood of the church, Singh called on the young people present in the audience to carry on the work and build upon the foundation laid by their forebears.

“We need young people who love the church so much that they will quarrel with it and challenge it to stand up and be counted among those who will not settle for mortgaging the future.

“We need young people who believe that our opinion, our voice, our action matters when it comes to building life-flourishing communities,” Singh added. “I dare to suggest that we have those young people in this hall today and throughout your churches... young people must accept the call to reconstruct a theology that is grounded in the God of justice, as manifested in Jesus of Nazareth who faced the cross of Calvary in pursuit of life for all.”

Maljavar: An indigenous roundtable seminar on the Gospel vs cultures



In recent years, churches have always enthusiastically discussed topics such as “gospel vs culture” and “faith vs politics.” In order to create opportunities for a cross-generational dialogue, Heizang Church of Payuan Presbytery held the first roundtable seminar, entitled “Maljavar (Listen and Speak): An Indigenous Round Table Seminar on the Gospel vs Cultures” on 6 February.

Many renowned Indigenous scholars and pastors were invited to deliver their thoughts in the seminar, including Valagas Gadeljeman, Director of Indigenous Students Resource Center of I-Shou University; Rev. Masegeseg Zengrur Gadu, Professor Emeritus of NDHU College of Indigenous Studies; and Rev. Ljegean Tudalimaw, General Secretary of the Presbyterian Church of Taiwan Payuan Presbytery.

Gadeljeman reflected on how church believers and tribal people view current Paiwan marriage culture. He pointed out that, due to diverse factors, like cognitive

differences of traditional power hierarchies, insufficient knowledge of family genealogy and its subsequent relationships, and religious intervention of church perspectives have made people cast doubts about traditional Indigenous wedding rituals which form the irreplaceable aesthetics of Indigenous culture. He encouraged new generations of the Indigenous to leave their slumber and have more understanding about their own identity, family, and culture.

Gadu explained cultural significance in Indigenous daily lives, for example: wearing a bitter-apple-wreath, setting up a swing, lifting a sedan chair, as well as including the surname when writing a person’s name, as all these things can be used to trace and learn kinship relationships among traditional cultural fields, and help clarify the interactions between social class and power. He also introduced the Payuan’s cosmology, emphasizing that all things related to power hierarchies should be based on the ideal of “love.”

Posing the question: “Can Christians participate in the Indigenous traditional rituals?” Gadu suggested a return to the narrative of Indigenous culture to understand specific actions or cultural behaviours. “What we need to appreciate is that many values or ideas that need to be restored from the Indigenous cultures were actually written in the Bible,” he reminded, “especially as we had to respect God as a ubiquitous ‘creator,’ because only a humble student of Indigenous culture could recognize the order and sequence of His extraordinarily divine creations.”

Tudalimaw discussed how to view preachers’ political statements. She shared her experiences of being exposed to Taiwan history, women’s theology, and the awakening movement of Indigenous rights when she was a young seminary student. All these challenging issues inspired her to explore her Indigenous ethnic identity.

After her graduation from the seminary, Tudalimaw became a pastor in an Indigenous church and maintained her strong and diverse political affiliations. She explicitly stated that faith must be practiced in life, and the believers should be called to care about issues closely related to them. Regardless of their political ideologies and leanings, they should at least have a clear thought and stance, so that they would not be slaughtered like a lamb for the lack of one.

Finally, Tudalimaw expressed her hope that the new generation of the Indigenous can work together to build a church that is inclusive and filled with faith, hope, and love.

United Reformed Church Youth Assembly 2024 roundup



Story, Story, Story” was the theme of United Reformed Church Youth Assembly 2024, held at Whitmoore Lakes in Staffordshire, 26-28 January.

Throughout the weekend, the Youth Assembly explored the theme through personal storytelling and engaged in a range of workshops including drama, short-form video, and Bible study.

Two keynotes were delivered by the Rev. Rosalind Selby and Tessa Henry-Robinson which helped members of Youth Assembly ponder their place in God’s story but also God’s place in theirs, as well as what it means to be created in God’s image.

There were opportunities to learn more about Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories with a live linkup with Samuel in Jerusalem for a workshop and Bible study.

Hilarious late-night entertainment by poet Harry Baker allowed the Youth Assembly to hear other stories. A mix of different late-night activities including Godly Play and Lego Church, sports and games, ensured there was plenty to do in the evening.

Heather Moore inducted as Youth Assembly Moderator 2024-2025

“I’m thrilled to be taking over the role of Moderator for the next year. Obviously, we have a massive change ahead of us as the Youth Assembly moves to a later date and new venue, but this presents us with a fantastic opportunity to try new things with the program and move the event in a new direction,” said Moore. “In my role I also hope to increase and strengthen our ecumenical relationships, hopefully with the planning of a new event for young people. Overall, though, my hope is that Youth Assembly and other United Reformed Church Youth spaces are a place where young people can gather in fellowship and grow in their relationship with God as their authentic selves.”



Maya Withall of Wessex Synod elected Moderator 2024-2025

Withall, 17, became a Christian through her local Pilots Company and has been part of the United Reformed Church since she was seven. She has also been the Wessex Synod Representative on the Youth Executive for the past three years and the Green Apostle, engaging with the United Reformed Church Net Zero task group and other environmental projects.

Withall said: “Coming from a non-Christian background the United Reformed Church has been where I found and grew faith. I am passionate about enabling other young people to do this.”

Jadan Turner of North Western Synod elected Assembly Executive and General Assembly Rep

Turner is 18-years-old and currently a business admin apprentice at her local council, where she is developing skills in communication and understanding how larger organisations work. In her spare time, Turner plays with a first section brass band and enjoys watching motorsports. She has attended General Assembly twice and her confidence has grown from just being present and voting, to contributing to the discussions and asking questions.

“Having been involved with my local church and the wider synod, I have developed a passion for the voice of the youth within the United Reformed Church being heard, and to make sure that they feel empowered in the same way that I do,” said Turner.

Philippa Osei steps down as Youth Moderator (2023-2024)

In her end-of-term speech, Philippa Osei, who made history by becoming Youth Assembly’s first Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic Moderator, said: “It’s the

end! I am both relieved and grateful and also sad to be leaving this pivotal period of my life so far. Through the encouragement of my friends here at Youth Assembly, I took [the role] on and do not regret my decision!”

As Youth Moderator, Osei has blazed trails, from organising the Youth Assembly to attending Greenbelt and hosting events at the youth tent. All these have made Osei stronger in her faith and expanded her horizons.

“The skills I have gained over the past two years as Moderator-Elect and then Moderator will serve me well going forward,” declared Osei, “I give all the glory to God.”

The event was closed with the induction of the new Youth Executive who will pave the way for a different Youth Assembly with the change of venue next year to King’s Park Conference Centre in Northampton.

At A Glance

Ecumenical News

CWM, WCRC strengthen collaboration, deepen partnership



The Council for World Mission (CWM) hosted a delegation from the World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC) in Singapore on 2 February to discuss common strategic visions and a deeper partnership.

The WCRC delegation—led by its General Secretary, Rev. Dr Setri Nyomi, and Rev. Philip Vinod Peacock, WCRC Executive Secretary for Justice and Witness—was received warmly by Rev. Dr Jooseop Keum, CWM General Secretary, and Dr Sudipta Singh, CWM Deputy Secretary-Programmes.

In his introductory address, Nyomi touched on WCRC’s vision, strategic, and programmatic objectives as well as plans surrounding the upcoming General Council in 2025.

He spoke warmly of the shared history and the complementary relationship between the CWM and WCRC where CWM’s depth in missiological insights dovetails with WCRC’s global influence.

Reciprocating the warmth of WCRC, Keum echoed that even as WCRC has been a trailblazer in its radical theological vision, it is equally vital that its legacy be preserved.

“WCRC’s commitment to discerning, confessing, witnessing, and being reformed has always been exemplary. The next step forward for us will be the finding of the right tools to elevate from discerning to confessing our desire to live out God’s promise of a new heaven and a new earth.

To achieve this, a broader ecumenical movement that predicates itself on the meaningful engagement of relevant governance structures must be found,” said Keum.

Singh said that the organisations could work together in the areas of gender justice, peace and development, ecology and economic justice—including revitalizing the New International and Financial and Economic Architecture—and interfaith cooperation.



Singh also spoke of the need to work on the upcoming 1700th anniversary of the Nicene Creed and to reflect on this particularly from a reformed theological perspective.

CWM and WCRC also agreed to collaborate on The Onesimus Project, transformative ecumenism, and Kairos Palestine.

The visit paved the way for both organisations to explore the possibility of a signing of a Memorandum of Understanding that will establish further avenues and opportunities for partnership and cooperation.

CWM and WCRC decided to hold regular online meetings as well as plan a future in-person meeting in London.

Women on the way in the UEM Communion of Churches



2 9 participants from the partnerships between Namibia, South Africa, Botswana, and Germany met online in early March when for the first time, partners from all four countries were invited with the intention of “not talking about each other, but with each other”.

On the first evening, three women who have taken on leadership positions in their churches shared their experiences.

Elizabeth von Francois of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in the Republic of Namibia (ELCRN), who heads the Andreas Kukuri Centre, a church training facility said: “Step out of your comfort zone, take on challenges and make room for a supportive environment.”

This was also supported by Brenda Sass, who works at The Rhenish Church in South Africa’s (RCSA)

church leadership team: “As women in leadership positions, we serve as role models for the younger generation in our churches.”

Meanwhile, Claudia Müller-Bück, Superintendent of the Bad Godesberg/Voreifel church district from the Evangelical Church in the Rhineland (EKiR), presented the mentoring programme for women and leadership in her church. She said, “While working very closely with the young female pastors in my church district, I would often recommend that they engage in further leadership training. Not because I think they particularly need it. But a conscious strengthening and realisation that women can, in fact, lead, and how they can lead, I think that will take quite some time.”

A long and intense but encouraging discussion then ensued about the “quite some time”, where hopes and also disappointments and injuries were shared in a safe and intimate setting.

The next morning, various women from the grassroots level in their churches had their say.

Pat Solomons, who is responsible for the RCSA’s work with the elderly, spoke about her role models and ended with a very personal conclusion: “I am convinced that right now is an appropriate time to examine the role of women in the fulfilment of the call to the priesthood of all believers. Given the chaos in the world today, led primarily by privileged men, there is reason to believe that women’s leadership can offer something new and - may I say it - something better.”

Adrie Jantze took the participants through exemplary work done by women. Adrie is the coordinator of the Girls Club in Kamanjab, Otjiwarongo church district, ELCRN. She showcased how trained mentors are working against gender-based violence and support single mothers.

Additionally, Katja Dummer from the EKiR, presbyter in Wuppertal and head of a partnership committee, spoke about her experience of learning in concrete partnership work: “There are no problems, only challenges”. According to her, this also applied to women and leadership.

“The whole conference was about telling each other your own story, listening to each other and discovering common ground. The ‘we’ and ‘you’ that is often still used in partnerships became a common ‘we’ around a joined topic,” said UEM co-workers, Dr Elizabeth Silayo and Claudio Gnypek, both from the Regional Service of the UEM, and Frauke Bürgers, the Officer for Partnerships of UEM while summing up the two days of meeting.

“Despite this being on Zoom, we entered into a real relationship where we could exchange our ideas openly and comfortably!”

DAKE releases book on Bogota Programme



Indecent and Indignant: Theologies, Education and Praxis of Liberation in Latin America [Indecentes e Indignadas. Teologías, Pedagogías y praxis de liberación en América Latina] by Graham McGeoch and Luis Martínez Andrade (eds) is set to be released in 2024.

Containing 16 chapters, the book which will be written in Spanish, explores and deep dives into Liberation Theology as a movement: socialism,

marxism, colonialism, human rights, civil society, church, militarism, education, ecology, indigeneity, womanism, queer theology and theory, the bible, decoloniality (including anticoloniality and postcoloniality).

The book will be launched at the International Book Fair, Bogota, Colombia in April 2024.



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