

COUNCIL FOR WORLD MISSION

INSiGHT

JULY 2024

CWM Assembly 2024



INSiGHT Contents

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The CWM Assembly as a transformative event



I will never forget the profound joy and gratitude that I felt during the Opening Worship at the 2024 CWM Assembly. From that moment forward—and even prior to that with the Women and Youth Pre-assemblies—I believe we collectively seized every opportunity for us to rise to life as a community of churches, together towards a transformative mission of God.

Gathered in the beautiful Grace Family Church, amid music that poured from the very spirit of the band, we prepared to listen deeply to each other's hopes, dreams, and prayers.



Then, at the Assembly over the next several days, we found spaces of belonging. And most of all we gathered as one body in Christ, united in our mission to proclaim the message of God's love.

As you peruse the speeches, reflections, Bible studies, and other fruits of the CWM Assembly, we hope these help you not only sustain the momentum of the Assembly but also discern the many ways in which we will keep moving forward together. After such meaningful dialogue, diverse experiences, and learning from each other's wisdom, we came away with a deep connection with God and with each other.

As we continue to harvest the fruits of the Assembly, may we continue to serve as one Body of Christ united in our mission to proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ to a troubled and suffering world.

As I said many times during the Assembly, thank you to our South African hosts, particularly the Uniting Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa (UPCSA) and United Congregational Church of Southern Africa (UCCSA).



In recent decades, we have witnessed a significant shift in the centre of gravity of world Christianity to the global South. Together, Africa, Asia, Latin America, and the Pacific are now home to almost 75 percent of Christians in the world. By 2050, Africa alone will be home to more than 40 percent of Christians in the world. In this demographic shift, Africa has emerged as one of the most dynamic centres of Christian mission. This shift is not merely geographical but also symbolises a profound spiritual movement that recognises the vibrancy, resilience, and deep faith of the African people. Africa is emerging as a spiritual powerhouse, and the responsibility that comes with this shift is not to be taken lightly.

Amid these joyful observations are also some more sobering ones. The world is deeply wounded, even catastrophic. The racism and supremacism which powered the colonial era remain as forceful today as ever in the last 400 years. It is imperative that we work toward a future in which colonialism and racism are part of our history, not our present. It is this understanding that motivated us to implement The Onesimus Project (TOP), formerly known as the Legacies of Slavery (LOS). Through its four areas of focus—Legacies of Slavery, Modern-day slavery, Education for Liberation, and Transformative Ecumenism—CWM's TOP aims to not only address various forms of slavery but also decolonise mission, education, and ecumenism.

Even with points of hope such as The Onesimus Project, it is, at times, difficult to move forward with courage. When we falter, let us remember the stories of the brave young men and women, and children in Soweto who resisted the injustices of the apartheid regime. At our Sunday worship in Durban at the Assembly, we bore witness to their stories.



We grieved their loss, even as we celebrated the transformational change and freedom with dignity that they have achieved for this nation.

Let their courage be an example to us all of the enduring human spirit's fight for freedom, justice, and equality. May the God of life enable us to uphold the spirituality of life and resist all forms of life denying forces.

Transformational change comes often from the least, from the margins, from the oppressed, from those who experience pain and tragedy. It is out of these sufferings we put our trust in the God of justice, who calls us to "Rise to Life: Together in Transformation."



Viewpoints

CWM 2024 Assembly Statements



Council for World Mission Assembly Statement

Rise to Life: Together in Transformation



CWM ASSEMBLY 2024

DURBAN, SOUTH AFRICA, 12-19 JUNE 2024

The Council for World Mission (CWM) Assembly met in Durban, South Africa, from 12 to 19 June 2024. With its struggles for emancipation and dignity, Africa provided a youthful and inspiring context for an Assembly focussed on rising to life. With great anticipation, member church delegates, partners and guests gathered for the first Assembly since the Covid-19 pandemic. In face of socio-political catastrophe and environmental emergency, the Assembly heard the call to rise to life and be together in transformation.

To follow Jesus Christ is a matter of transformation (Romans 12:2). We are transformed as we travel the journey of faith; and as we are drawn into the mission of God we become agents of transformation in our world. The Assembly nurtured prophetic spirituality to enable us to fulfil our missional calling in today's world. We testify that the Triune God creates the world by love in and for cosmic community (Gen1-2); mission is a living spirituality and embodiment of God's love (1 John 4: 7-21). Led by the voices and actions of young people, we bear witness that through radical discipleship we can overcome life-denying powers.

Transforming Power

It is not true that market forces hold supreme authority in the human community.

This is true: "You cannot serve both God and money" (Matthew 6:24). Rejecting the idolatry of wealth and power, disciples seek justice, compassion, and righteousness.

It is not true that the powerful are entitled to attack, subjugate, colonise or enslave their neighbours.

This is true: We are morally obliged to make reparation for historic wrongs and to actively resist and dismantle all forms of coloniality and enslavement.

It is not true that women must occupy a secondary and subordinate role in church and society.

This is true: God calls women to leadership in mission and calls everyone to practice gender justice and equity to effect transformative change in every aspect of life.

It is not true that migrants and refugees pose a threat and deserve hostility.

This is true: We are called to offer hospitality to strangers (Hebrews 13:2) as we work for justice and dignity with all who are marginalised and vulnerable. We are called to be agents of transformation, resisting oppressive powers, and embodying alternative ways of living and being.

Revisioning Mission

It is not true that we can be complacent about the climate crisis.

This is true: passion for the flourishing of all creation lies at the heart of the mission of God.

It is not true that world peace can be secured by reliance on military might.

This is true: “blessed are the peacemakers” (Matthew 5:9); mission takes us to places of conflict and brokenness to work for justice and reconciliation.

It is not true that by ourselves we are strong enough to overcome global injustice.

This is true: “Greater is the one who is in you than the one who is in the world” (1 John 4.4); by building collaboration through transformative ecumenism we can defeat the forces of death and destruction.

It is not true that evangelism must be aggressive, divisive and oppressive.

This is true: we can share the good news of Jesus in humility and radical hospitality.

We are called to attend to the signs of the times, discerning the Spirit of life and God’s call to mission today.

Life-Flourishing Communities

It is not true that we must face pain and suffering in isolation and abandonment.

This is true: “If one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; if one member is honoured, all the members rejoice with it” (1 Corinthians 12:26). African values of Ubuntu teach us about interconnectedness.

It is not true that some people are disposable and can be ignored, excluded or slaughtered.

This is true: every human being is cherished by God, whose loving purpose is for all to live in dignity and to flourish in society (Psalm 139: 13-15).

It is not true that formation for leadership should be available only for a small elite.

This is true: transformative education, spiritual guidance and leadership development should be accessible to all; and formation opportunities for women, young people and children are a missional priority.

It is not true: that the time for cross-cultural service in mission is over.

This is true: churches are enriched by sending and receiving partners in mission.

We are called to engage in practices that reflect resurrection life, building life-flourishing communities.

Rise to Life

It is not true that death has the last word for humanity and the earth.

This is true: Christ has risen from the dead and we too can rise to life.

We rise to life in the Holy Spirit.

We are called to a mission which does not belong to us. Rather, it is God’s mission, effected through the action of God’s Spirit in the life of the world.

The unity we seek is not achieved through our own efforts. Rather, it is the Holy Spirit who unites, inspiring our spiritual commitment.

Facing our torn and troubled world, by ourselves we are unable to be hopeful. Rather, we “overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit” (Romans 15:13). As we move with the wind of the Spirit towards our CWM jubilee in 2027, we trust God to renew our vision of mission, embodied in life-flourishing communities.

Council For World Mission:

Women's Statement

We affirm the contribution of all
God's people
in church and community.

We advocate for the equitable
participation of women
in leadership in relation to God
and one another.

Grassroots: Encourage multi-dimensional change,
starting within homes and communities.

Empowerment: Promote biblical literacy from an early
age to reshape leadership.

Mentorship: Foster programs to guide and uplift
emerging women leaders.

Support: Establish networks for mutual encourage-
ment and advancement.

Council For World Mission:

Youth Statement



Preamble

There is a saying in Chichewa that states ‘Achinyamata ndi atsogoleri a mmawa’. This translates to ‘The youths are the leaders of tomorrow’. In response to this saying we as youths come to proclaim to the General Assembly ‘We are in fact the leaders of today’. We affirm the words spoken by our Lord Jesus Christ in Matthew 21:16, “From the lips of youths and infants you, Lord, have called forth praise”. Since a significant portion of CWM members worldwide are made up of young people, we are in a unique position to ‘call forth God’s praise’. Regarding the theme of this Assembly, ‘Rising to Life’, Jesus proclaims in John 10:10, “I have come to give life and life abundantly”. The Biblical Greek distinguishes between life as merely existing materially (βίος) and life filled to the brim with meaning, life that flourishes (ζωήν). We as youths believe that many of the problems that the world faces stem from the fact that we have aim for a life of βίος hile God is calling us to ζωήν, life in flourishing community with God.

Through this statement we have come to let our voice as young people be heard, and to proclaim what it means to rise to life. Ours is a voice of faith that bears witness to God’s Spirit who is already at work in our contexts. It is a voice of hope that continues to strive and pray for the renewal of this world. Above all it is a voice of love that stands in solidarity with the poor and oppressed, not just with our fellow humans but with all of creation. It is our calling as future leaders of the church to advocate for those in the margins whose voices all too often remain unheard. We as young people must not let our age be used as a reason to disqualify us from claiming our place at the table. Indeed, as the LORD said to Jeremiah ‘Do not say, “I am too young.” You must go to everyone I send you to and say whatever I command you” (Jeremiah 1:7). We have come to this Assembly to answer to this call and let our prophetic voice be heard.



1. Discerning the signs of the times as youths

We the youths, in discerning the signs of the times, observe many pressing issues, the biggest three being the decline apathy towards religion in youth, inequality and the Climate Crisis.

Apathy for Religion

Instead of “believing in God” or not “believing in God”, most of our generation choose to not care either way, with apathy towards religion. Losing the meaning given through Jesus, the result is a rising mental health crisis amongst the youths of the world that have to deal with a completely new way of social life through the internet, leading to anxiety, loneliness and depression.

Inequalities

There are also worldwide inequalities that need to be addressed. There is an increase in the disparity between the rich and poor. This inequality manifests differently in each region, but worldwide injustice is seen with the treatment of the homeless, the refugee, the marginalised, the poor, and the oppressed. Also Xenophobia, racism, sexism and other life-denying systems of oppressions have no place in our society or Church, but they are nevertheless prevalent. People abandoned by the church and wider society with no support are dying, yet all of us seem to be preoccupied with caring only for ourselves. Why do these issues

remain in the Church when we are taught that Jesus loves and we Christians should love? We are taught to love but not how to love, we are told to stand up for justice but not how to do so. Wider society is apathetic to the needs of others, preferring to please oneself or one’s personal community, consuming for themselves regardless of the harm it does to others.

Climate Change

This is at its clearest when observing the environmental degradation in the Pacific region and beyond. We are all taught to fight against climate change, most of the world knows that there is a Climate Crisis; however, is there anything significant being done to combat this? Not enough from powerful governments, but also not enough from our Church. At current trajectories we youth will live to experience a refugee crisis as over a billion people will live in wet-bulb zones where it is impossible to live, even in shade, without artificially cooled environments. When we are your age, the world will be completely different to how it is now. With no changes it will be worse but with your guidance we can build a world that can sustain future generations.

2. Confessing and repentance

Although being called to be the salt and light of the world, we, as Christ’s followers, oftentimes fall short of His glory and lose our way on this journey. Confronted by constant loss of believers, due to social and spiritual deterioration in this rapidly changing

world, churches are still too concerned with self-preservation and merely aim to “survive”, not to “thrive”. Churches should not focus on paying to keep buildings open instead of giving money to youth work and societal needs. The Church is becoming less relevant to people who are seeking spiritual guidance and asylum, while this generation, the youths, are exactly the very people who are struck by uncertainties and even hopelessness. The Church has thus lost its appeal to the young people, who would now rather seek spiritual support otherwise or simply live a worldly life to “enjoy the moment” to evade from the helplessness they feel. Affected by the gloom and negativity in the global atmosphere, even Christian youths now have less interest in being part of their own church or actively engaged in God’s missions. Unfortunately, the struggles of young Christians do not just originate in worldly matters, but also within the church. Youths are critical and sensitive to current problems, and are not worried about changing for improvements. Church leaders, who have more dominance in decision-making and resource allocation, may not welcome the idea of change as it means challenging the status quo as well as their own authority. Worse still, pride and ego, in the form of racism, class superiority, etc., happens somehow among brothers and sisters. Across cultures and nationalities, there is a common perception that youths should fulfill expectations of their predecessors, which leads to negligence of youth struggles and needs, and eventually burnout. Altogether, this has caused our churches to become rather numb to youth issues, which in turn limits the churches’ awareness of the spiritual struggles faced by young believers.

As the word of God stated in both James 5:16, “Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working” and 1 John 1:9, “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” It is therefore important that as the body of Christ, as the Church and youths, we admit our shortcomings and hold firm to God and His words so that we can renew and become His rightful witnesses.

3. Affirmation

We as youths also wish to bear witness to the way in which God’s Spirit is already at work within the Church and the world. We recognise the seeds planted by those before us and witness the effects, but we continue to strive to bear fruit. The youth affirm that through the Holy Spirit we can learn to grow, 1 Corinthians 3:6 emphasises “I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God has been making it grow.” Though we have said that the Church is not doing enough for this, we also recognise and appreciate that

the church is continuing to progress forward by having some support for the youth to develop their skills through various programmes and opportunities. An example highlighted is this very youth assembly gathering which equips and enables young people from different regions and contexts to express their concerns, creating an avenue for youths to collectively address regional struggles and build awareness. Moreover, these assemblies give rise to churches to unite and stand in solidarity with one another. These events allow us to plant seeds which will bear fruit of transformation, but as we await for growth we continue to nurture these seeds with constant engagement by youths through platforms such as these assemblies where youths are invited to speak on their subjective experiences.

Furthermore, being united as one body in Christ, the churches have an increased collaboration on focusing on missions that share a common goal. For example, providing scholarships and opportunities for students to achieve their goals and offering employment to those in need of support. God’s work is evident not only through these events, but highlighted in different forms such as youth camps that guide youths to explore the gospel in a range of forms consisting of movement, drama, music and more. Whilst sharing in fellowship with a diverse demographic of people, we learn the significance of what can be done to progress the mission of Christ. We, as youths, sincerely recognize the seeds that our elders have planted, we are firmly committed to stewarding and watering them and we affirm that in the end, it is the Holy Spirit that makes our endeavors grow.

4. Call to action

We the youths call upon our churches to take actions in making the changes necessary in the face of the challenges of our time:

We call on our churches to act out of love and hospitality through sending missionaries to other parts of the world, and giving support generously wherever injustice and oppression occurs.

We call on our churches to open up themselves to be attentive and accommodating to the needs of our communities, and to encourage an open space and discussion for everyone through enhancing the church’s presence and engagement with the youths in person and digitally.

We call on our churches to address the issues of self-interest and financial mismanagement that leads to economic injustice.

We call on our churches to address the issues of environmental neglect that lead to unsustainability.

We call on our churches to reject harmful, anthropocentric, and authoritarian forms of theology that only serve to permeate life-denying systems.

We call on our churches to inspire and equip our youths to pursue the biblical calling for justice through sermons, social media, and various events and conferences, and support our youths to transform justice-seeking objectives into practices and actions.

We call on our churches to have more cross-regional gatherings to track the progress and changes that have been made, to solidify the relationships that are built, and to learn and encourage each other.

5. Rising Together

The Church is fundamentally called to be the body of Christ working together towards the Missio Dei. As long as the Church remains divided, we cannot answer this call. Rising to life is in essence a communal enterprise that requires us to rise to life together. In an effort to strengthen ties across borders and enhance intercultural understanding, the churches across

regions should be working together. This entails building connections with people across the globe via partnerships, international gatherings, and digital platforms. The church should promote volunteer work, internships, and cultural exchange programmes as ways to foster stronger ties. By assisting people in comprehending and empathizing with diverse cultures, the programmes are able to promote global citizenship. Additionally, the churches should work together on international projects like social justice campaigns, sustainable development projects, carbon footprint management, and disaster relief. The churches should pool the resources and experiences to address urgent global concerns to this cooperative approach. The churches should also build an online community of support to exchange knowledge, resources, and experiences where people can interact, share knowledge, and encourage one another in their international pursuits on this online platform. To prepare people for participation in groups, churches should offer cross-cultural training and instruction. This involves exchanging best practices, insights, and knowledge to assist people in gaining the abilities and comprehension required for successful international cooperation. The churches should have a more significant impact on the world by utilizing their combined strengths and experiences through resource sharing. Through sharing the experiences and contexts of each church, we believe that the churches can learn from each other, thrive together, and rise together as a life-flourishing global community.



At A Glance

CWM News



Outgoing CWM Moderator:

“We are stronger when we are together”



As she completes her four-year term as CWM Moderator, Rt Rev. Lydia Neshangwe took time to reflect on joy of gathering for the Assembly, especially in Africa, as well as the highlights of her tenure and hopes for CWM's future.

After eight years of not being able to convene as one body due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Neshangwe sees the CWM Assembly as a family reunion during which we greet loved ones with joy. “But also, as you have at family reunions, there are also new faces and new members of the family,” she said.

“It’s exciting to be here in Africa,” added Neshangwe, who also serves as the Moderator of the Uniting Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa (UPCSA).

While some people talk about AI as artificial intelligence, Neshangwe reflects it could stand for African intelligence. “What is the advantage of having the assembly in Africa?” she asks. “Africa is highly

spiritual. Africa is highly relational. Africa is colorful. But also Africa is about resilience. Some of the difficulties we are dealing with in Africa are happening within the Council for World Mission right now.”

Among the highlights of her tenure has been the launch of The Onesimus Project, which seeks to address the roots of racialised inequalities and injustices within the CWM family of church and the wider world.

“The Onesimus Project is really a blessing from God,” said Neshangwe, who added that the project is cutting-edge because it’s so inclusive. “It is dealing with the legacies of slavery and its impact but also with modern day slavery,” she said. “It also has a third aspect which is transformative ecumenism, and then, finally, education for empowerment, so we are not just talking—we are educating and empowering people to handle the slavery they find themselves in.”

Anticipating Assembly Stories

Why is the storytelling aspect of the CWM Assembly so powerful? “The moment we begin to share our stories, fellowship happens—and that is one of the chief reasons why we come to Assembly,” said Neshangwe. “The second thing is, enrichment happens. Thirdly and importantly, when we share our stories, discernment happens.”

She has many stories to share from her four years as moderator, a time she regards as an adventure. “It’s been an adventure with God, an adventure with the organisation, and an adventure with the people,” she said. “My parting message is, whenever we work together, whenever we cooperate, we make progress. Whenever we follow the will towards divisiveness, in actual fact, we decline. We also decline not just in numbers but qualitatively as well. We are stronger when we are together.”

She treasures the opportunities she has had to interact with such a diverse group of people and churches.

“The challenge, always, is to try to unify people,” she said. “Now, we are talking, here, 32 member churches, each of them with a different history.”

For the new Moderator who will be elected during the Assembly, Neshangwe has some advice to share: “It’s a joyful job. It’s a spiritual job. We are a spiritually-driven organization,” she said. “Rely on the Holy Spirit. The one thing we can’t do without, is the leading of the Holy Spirit.”

“Women of Worth” gather for Pre-assembly



The Women Pre-assembly kicked off on 12 June in Durban, South Africa, as a precursor to the full CWM Assembly that ran from 12-19 June.

The theme “Women Of Worth” was explored by the Pre-assembly in many ways: through songs, prayers, speakers, and small group discussions.

Rev. Julie Sim, CWM Mission Secretary – Mission Programme & Partnership, East & South Asia Region, expressed appreciation for all those who gathered—and all those who work to transform their own local churches and communities.

“One of my responsibilities as a mission secretary is to create spaces for women, and women leaders,” she said. “The world has changed. We need to be brave; we need to take risks.”

Women representing every CWM region and most of its 32 Member Churches were asked to name women in the Bible who inspire them. They called out: “Deborah. Mary. Esther. Ruth. Lydia. Myriam.” And many more.

Jane Seng, CWM Programme Associate – East Asia & South Asia, offered an overview of the full Assembly Programme, which officially began with an Opening Worship on 13 June at Grace Church in Durban.

“We all come with different ideas,” said Seng. “This is very important because this is part of the reason why we’re here today.”

Exploring the assembly theme

The women discussed the Assembly theme, “Rise to Life: Together in Transformation.”

Rev. Dr Monica J. Melanchthon, keynote speaker for the Women Pre-assembly, is an Associate Professor, Hebrew Bible/Old Testament Studies, at the Pilgrim Theological College, University of Divinity.

Melanchthon stated that more women should be at national and international tables as decision-making peacemakers, as currently they are severely underrepresented in those arenas.

“How many women are involved in these conversations?” she asked. “If the mothers of Gaza and the mothers of the Jewish community were allowed to participate in that discussion, maybe the war would have ended by now.”

What do you want to transform?

Women also responded to the Assembly sub-themes, “Transforming Power,” “Revisioning Mission,” and “Building Life-flourishing Communities.”

“What do you want to transform in your context?” asked Rev. Dr Minnow Oh, who moderated a discussion on these sub-themes.



Oh is the Programme Coordinator for Gender Justice at the World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC). She is an ordained pastor at the Presbyterian Church of Korea (PCK) who also serves with CWM as a Mission Partner.

“Gender justice is a challenge of leadership and power,” she said. “Leadership is very situational. Different situations call for different styles of leadership. That’s why gender justice is not only for women. It’s an issue for all—for everyone.”

Oh noted that there are very few women in leadership positions within the churches—including CWM Member Churches. “We all know that it is costly to persevere and to transform the power dynamics,” she said. “What we can do is empower the women leaders in this room at least to improve and reform all situations that create gender injustice in church and society. Your daily sacrifices are for life-giving power. And your unity as women is a blessing from the God of life.”

Affirming “contribution of all God’s people”

The Women’s Pre-assembly developed a statement that was delivered during the CWM Assembly, that ran from 12-19 June in Durban, South Africa.

“We affirm the contribution of all God’s people in the church,” the statement began. “We advocate for the equitable participation of women in leadership in relation to God and one another.”

The rest of the statement spelled “G.E.M.S.”—Grassroots, Empowerment, Mentorship, and Support.

Under “Grassroots,” the statement encourages “multi-dimensional change, starting within homes and communities.”

Related to “Empowerment,” the text promoted “biblical literacy from an early age to reshape leadership.”

For “Mentorship,” the women called for fostering “programs to guide and uplift emerging women leaders.”

And “Support,” in the statement, meant establishing “networks for mutual encouragement and advancement.”

The Women Pre-assembly also added a creative flair to the statement by including a video element that portrays women across the world singing and offering greetings in many languages.

“The energy within this group was incredible,” said Rev. Julie Sim, CWM Mission Secretary – Mission Programme & Partnership, East & South Asia Region.

“We have really capitalised on every millisecond we had together. We know this statement will touch hearts. Thank you so very much for your contribution. Glory be to God!”



Encouraging words

In a word of encouragement to the Women's Pre-assembly, outgoing CWM Moderator Rt Rev. Lydia Neshangwe shared that being in the pre-assembly felt like being on holy ground.

She named three characteristics women bring to the table: femininity, community, and spirituality. "If you are compassionate, continue to be compassionate," she said. "It's a lonely world out there and by nature women tend to be community people. I would encourage you to find a community."

Spirituality is what separates CWM from other global organizations, Neshangwe reminded the women. "We operate by faith, not by sight," she said. "Give of who you are—because you are here for a reason, you are here for a purpose."

Reflection on gender justice

During the Women Pre-assembly, Karen Campbell, secretary for global and intercultural ministries for the United Reformed Church, shared reflections on gender justice.

"What are the things that we see and hold, and repeat and uphold, that are part of the pain?" she asked the women. "How often do we just absorb and go with it?"

She urged women to consider the messages they receive—and that they internalize—about aspirations and career choices. "One of the most influential spaces for me was church," she said. "Church also taught me that I am made in the image of God. But even with the church teaching me that, the church teaches that some of God's children are formed in a godlier image than others—and the demarcation is gender."

She also called for women to think about what the "glass ceiling" means to them. "Is it sometimes women ourselves who are keeping the glass ceiling nicely polished and nicely cleaned?" she asked.

"Do we really want to smash it—or are we a bit scared? We can critique the status quo—but are we too wary to push through?"

The full women's statement can be found on page 9.

Youth Pre-assembly and statement recommits to unity in one voice



Youth delegates to the CWM Assembly gathered on 12 June, one day before the full Assembly in Durban, South Africa, to share what's uppermost in their minds when it comes to radical transformation.

As they introduced themselves, they also shared what was in their hearts. "Personally, I'd like to thank God for bringing us all together," said Zeerak Shahbaz from the United Reformed Church. He was among more than 40 youth delegates who came from all six CWM regions.

Many hearts, one voice

Corey Tyler Hampton, a mission enabler with the Presbyterian Church of Wales and a member of the CWM Programme Reference Group, reflected on how

the CWM Assembly theme—"Rise to Life: Together in Transformation"—means we put our trust in God, even in a world full of violence and death.

"We are called and empowered to spread God's healing love to all creation," he said. "The good news is that new life has broken into this world."

He referred to the youth delegates as priests of a new creation. "To rise to life is to enter into God's promise of abundant life for all," he said. "If we want to see true radical transformation, we must come together as one voice."

Though the young people—all of whom are 30 years old or younger—are from different places and contexts, this week gives them an opportunity to come together.



"As people of faith, we recognize that God is not the God of death but the God of life," said Hampton. "Therefore we do not lose hope. We are called to rise to life."

This means we must learn to take responsibility for what we've been given. "We can choose to follow the legacy of our ancestors in the ecumenical movement and work toward justice for the earth," he said.

Called to action

Rev. Daimon Mkandawire, CWM Mission Secretary-Ecology and Economy, and Africa Region, offered an overview of the CWM, including its history. He also expressed appreciation that young people often have the role of calling others to action.

"We hear about the abundant life we have in Christ," he said. "But we also hear that there must be unity in diversity. We hear of the role of faith in the gospel today. Thank you, that you have called us to action," he said.

Priyanka Samy, a Guest Practitioner in the School of Advanced Study at the University of London, is also the Youth Convener of the National Federation of Dalit Women, a grassroots network of Dalit women-led community-based organisations across India.

"The one thing I'd like for you to take away from what I'm saying is that not everything that is 'the norm' is good," she said. "For the longest time, in the very country that we are here in, racial segregation was the norm. The same thing applies to caste, really."

The caste system is not just restricted to social institutions such as marriage, Samy explained. "It influences the political economies. It influences where you will get a job. And, ladies and gentlemen, it even persists in our churches."

She underscored that people from historically marginalized communities need to be at the table. "No amount of transformative change can come from people who have been oppressors," she said. "You see what's happening in the world with Palestine. You think that people in positions of power can bring about transformative change? The answer is no."

New people and new voices are needed to bring about transformative changes, she urged. "If the church is committing to really bringing about life-flourishing communities, it has to put its money where its mouth is," she said.

"The youths are the leaders of tomorrow"

The Youth Pre-assembly closed on 13 June as the youth representatives drafted a Statement that was presented on 15 June during the CWM Assembly.



The youth met in regional groups to draft points that would ultimately come together to form a united statement.

A series of five questions guided the youths:

- What are the three most pressing issues in your region?
- What are your solutions to address these issues, inspired by your faith and the Gospel?
- What are some affirmations of what has been done well by the churches in your region?
- What are some confessions of what has not been done well by the churches in your region?
- How can we go beyond our region and share each other's burdens as a life-flourishing community of CWM?

After a round of presentations from the youths in order of their regions, a final statement was drafted from the various regional findings and answers.

God's laws liberate, not restrict

Before the statement was drafted, God's message was delivered by Rev. Yep Jia Yii from Gereja Presbyterian Malaysia in Mandarin while Anita Chang from the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan took charge of translating.

Taking her message from Psalm 19, Yep reminded the youth that just as the Assembly logo was of the Baobab tree, the African symbol of life, so must the youths be as the voice of life and change for the world. She also added that God has intended for humans to care for and to steward the rest of creation despite humanity failing this charge in numerous ways such as wanton greed and exploitation.

"As the writer of Psalm 19, David looked at the vastness of creation and praised God and recognised his own insignificance, he also declared that the laws, statutes, and ordinances of God to be true and good for wisdom and revival," preached Rev. Yep who reminded the youths not to see God's commandments as a ball and chain but as a means to a liberated life.

CWM Moderator Rt Rev. Lydia Neshangwe also paid a surprise visit to the Youth Pre-assembly to bring her greetings on behalf of both UPCS and the AACC as a welcome to the gathered representatives.

Neshangwe urged the youths to take their place amongst the Christian community and to revitalise others around them with their energy.

"God is in the business of using young people," said Neshangwe who alluded to the story of Mary, who was a nameless young girl who would go on to become one of the most celebrated women in the Bible as the mother of Jesus Christ.

"When God chose the girl who would give birth to the Lord Jesus Christ, He did not choose the most powerful, rich, or the most beautiful lady, he chose Mary, whom the Bible did not even accord a last name."

"If God can do that for Mary, God can do that for you," encouraged Neshangwe.

The full youth statement can be found on page 10.

Dr Natalie Lin elected as CWM Moderator, new CWM Board and Trustees inaugurated



CWM delegates elected Dr Lin Ming-Chu Natalie, from the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan (PCT), as the incoming Moderator on 15 June. She will succeed outgoing Moderator Rt Rev. Lydia Neshangwe. Dr Natalie Lin will serve a four-year term that ends in 2028.

In describing her vision for CWM and her call to serve as Moderator, she noted that she has served CWM in many ways and for many years—but until this year had not thought of serving as Moderator.

“I have to be honest: it has been a struggle for me to come to the decision of running for election as Moderator,” she said. “But after the recommendation of my church and many prayerful nights, I believe the calling is now.”

She envisions this is a new stage, a way of being part of “the new church with an incredible impact we can achieve together,” she added.

“The position of the Moderator is not to be a guide and steer the ship but to be a servant to all, to be attentive

to the needs of the regions and the member churches, and anyone who is serving and working together for God’s mission,” she said.

She outlined three main tenets of her philosophy as incoming Moderator: listen to the marginalized; nurture dialogue and growth; and learn with a passionate heart.

“I am willing to offer up my servanthood as a sister, a nurturer, and a coworker,” she said. “As a woman in society, as a layperson in a preaching world, as a person from Taiwan, I am no stranger to what it is like to be oppressed or marginalized.”

She concluded: “We can be in partnership to return and bring restoration to the dignity of life.”

New key appointment holders elected

Subsequently, the CWM Assembly also elected a new Treasurer; a slate of Directors for the Council for World Mission Ltd.; Trustees of the Council for World Mission (UK); and a slate of Directors for the Council for World Mission Africa NPC.

The Treasurer-elect is **James Ronnie Kaboke, United Church of Solomon Islands.**

"This week I was moved by a statement from our general secretary that our world is deeply wounded, and that raised many questions for me: how can I use my time to save our wounded world?" he said upon being nominated for the position.

Directors for the Council for World Mission Ltd.

Africa

Rev. Chipasha Musaba
United Church of Zambia

Ms Afika Babazile Rwayi
Uniting Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa

Caribbean

Rev. Anthony Chung
United Church in Jamaica and the Cayman Islands

Mr Trevor Llewellyn Benn
Guyana Congregational Union

East Asia

Dr Natalie Lin (Moderator)
Presbyterian Church in Taiwan

Mr Lim Kar Hor
Gereja Presbyterian Malaysia

Europe

Rev. Dylan Rhys Parry
Union of Welsh Independents

Ms Gwen Aeron Down
Presbyterian Church of Wales

Pacific

Mr James Ronnie Kaboke (Treasurer)
Etaretia Porotetani Maohi

Ms Mina Tupu Saifoloi
Congregational Christian Church in American Samoa

South Asia

Rev. Sunil Mankhin
Church of Bangladesh

Ms Zodinpuui
Presbyterian Church of India



Trustees of the Council for World Mission (UK)

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Union of Welsh Independents

Ms Afika Babazile Rwayi
Uniting Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa

Mr Trevor Llewellyn Benn
Guyana Congregational Union

Rev. Dr Wonbin Park
Presbyterian Church of Korea (independent trustee)

Rev. Francois Pihaatae
Etaretia Porotetani Maohi (independent trustee)

Ms Zodinpuui
Presbyterian Church of India

Directors for the Council for World Mission Africa NPC

Rev. Kudzani Ndebele
United Congregational Church of Southern Africa
(independent director)

Rev. Anthony Chung
United Church in Jamaica and the Cayman Islands

Ms Gwen Aeron Down
Presbyterian Church of Wales

Opening worship: “You are soaked in the Holy Spirit”



With a procession of colourful flags and a lively band, the CWM family processed down the streets of eThekweni, South Africa, to officially begin the Assembly. Their pilgrimage landed them at Grace Family Church, where an Opening Worship celebrated the theme “Rise to Life: Together in Transformation.”

Before entering the church, they blessed a special place in the churchyard where a tree will be planted.

Rev. Daimon Mkandawire, CWM Mission Secretary-Ecology and Economy, and Africa Region, offered a special blessing over the sapling. “May it inspire us to plant seeds of hope, justice, and love in our communities and beyond,” he said.

Warm Welcome

CWM General Secretary Rev. Dr Jooseop Keum welcomed more than 250 CWM delegates and guests in the congregation.

“We bring with us our hopes, dreams, and prayers of our communities,” he said. “We gather not merely as a representatives of our respective member churches but we gather to affirm as one Body of Christ united in our mission to proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ to a troubled and suffering world.”

Rev. Dr Lungile Mpetsheni, General Secretary of the Uniting Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa, welcomed all to Africa.

“I am welcoming you to the land of the brave people, to the land of the warriors who fought over the years against all forms of colonialism,” he said. “Welcome to the land of the men and women of valor.”

Africa’s inclusive environment is ideal for a spirit of Rise to Life,” he added. “You coming to Africa is also a way for you to help us Rise to Life.”

Cllr Nompumelelo Ignatia Sithole, PR Councillor for Ethekewini Municipality, shared a message on behalf of the Office of the Mayor.

“We are grateful to the organisers for choosing our city as a venue of choice for this beautiful event,” she said. “The church has always played a critical role in galvanizing society. As the government, we understand that we cannot defeat the social ills ravaging our communities alone. We all know that the struggle for justice and freedom in this country is supported by the church.”

Revival in The Land

Outgoing CWM Moderator Rt Rev. Lydia Neshangwe delivered a sermon on how the Holy Spirit is poured out on everyone—children, old people, men, women, and even those who seem unworthy to society.

“How can the Holy Spirit ignore the hierarchy of the land?” she asked. “How can the Holy Spirit ignore the hierarchy of the Holy Temple?”

In biblical times, it was a very dangerous setting in which to equalize everyone with an outpouring of the Holy Spirit. “The Holy Spirit is troublemaking. The Holy Spirit is an insurgent in our lives,” she said. “The Holy Spirit is dangerous to our common beliefs.”

And it’s not just a spoonful of the Holy Spirit, she added. “You are soaked in the Holy Spirit, and when you begin to prophecy, you Rise to Life, and when we Rise to Life we are going to cause a revival in the land,” she said.

Public worship service brings remembrance and renewal to day of the African child



A public worship on 16 June at the Olive Convention Centre in Durban, South Africa, brought ringing music, remembrance, and renewal to several hundreds of people who gathered in the midst of the CWM Assembly.

The congregation—comprising CWM delegates, commemorated Day of the African Child, or Youth Day, in South Africa. On 16 June 1976, South Africa's black youth challenged the white apartheid government. The events, during which at least 200 schoolchildren died after thousands were ambushed by the police, marked a turning point in South Africa's political history.

Church congregations from all over South Africa—some who traveled far—joined CWM delegates and

ecumenical friends to express themselves in a space of freedom.

Greetings—spoken, written, or sung—were shared by the Uniting Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa, United Congregational Church of Southern Africa, and the World Communion of Reformed Churches, and others.

CWM General Secretary Rev. Dr Jooseup Keum offered greetings to the global family. “We are truly blessed to be here with your warm Durban hospitality and the spirituality of the churches,” he said. “My sincerest thanks to all of you, especially the sisters and brothers of Durban for joining this unique and special worship service.”

He remembered the stories of brave young men, women, and children in Soweto.

“While we grieve their losses of life, we celebrate the transformational changes of freedom and community that started from this uprising,” said Keum. “Their courage served as a powerful reminder of the enduring human right for freedom, justice, and equality.”

Keum also called attention to the Youth Statement received by the CWM Assembly on 15 June.

“Yesterday during our Assembly we heard a statement made by the young people who are present here and, in my experience of ecumenical gatherings, it was one of the most powerful statements I have ever heard,” said Keum.

Heaven belongs to the children

Rev. Dr Tessa Henry Robinson, moderator of the United Reformed Church, delivered a sermon that focused on celebration in the awe of God’s children.

“If heaven belongs to the children, our faith not only asks us but demands us to create space for children where they don’t just survive but thrive,” she said.

The Day of the African Child is not only cause for remembrance but a call to renew our commitment to the world’s children, she urged.

“When and how are we going to support the efforts that advocate for policies that protect our children?” she asked. “In the face of the brutal force that was meted up against the children in Soweto, God’s presence was with them, sharing in their pain and crying out for justice, for the God we worship is not a God whose heart is hard.”

The children in Soweto in 1976 would be Robinson’s age now, and she recalled hearing the news about the violence from her home in Trinidad and Tobago.

“It was a moment that shaped my understanding of justice, of the need to stand up for what is right, and the critical importance of education that empowers rather than oppresses,” she said, her voice breaking with emotion. “Education and communication are key to showing respect for peoples dignity and their desire to effective education is why the children took to the streets in protest.”

Rising to life is an intentional activity that we do together, concluded Robinson.

“May we be intentional about recognizing that the Day of the African Child is not just about remembrance but a renewed commitment to the rights and welfare of all children,” she said.

Keynote Speaker

Prof. Puleng Lenka-Bula:

“Hope is based on the promise of God to all humanity”



As the CWM Assembly began in Durban, South Africa, 250 delegates and ecumenical guests gathered for a week of praying, working, and acting together as they explore the theme “Rise to Life: Together in Transformation.”

Keynote speaker Prof. Puleng Lenka-Bula set the tone by reflecting on how hope and faith lead to transformative action. Lenka-Bula, of Lesotho and South African descent, is a trained feminist ethicist with a Ph.D. in Social Ethics.

She is the first woman Principal and Vice-Chancellor at the University of South Africa's existence and the third Black Vice-Chancellor since the advent of democracy in 1994.

The Assembly theme suggests, Lenka-Bula said, that we are all called to action, to agency, and to active advocacy.

“Such a method takes risks to present the cogency of radical change, so we don’t discuss only for the sake of discussing,” she said. “The current global economic system is a pyramid system that at its center denies and denigrates humanity.”

She expressed grave concern over the deification of money and the rise of fundamentalism in the world.

“It is that important for the church and society not to forget too soon, that prior to 1994, people like me were not human, according to the laws of South Africa,” she

said. “They were walked over, and the majority were trampled upon.”

She also questioned what it means to genuinely extend solidarity to those who are being decimated in Gaza. “What does it mean when we as church leaders do not ask these questions and appear to be somewhat complacent?” she said. “On whose side are we?”

She named ecological devastation as another serious challenge facing the world, citing as one example tornadoes and flooding that have wreaked havoc in the very area in which the Assembly is being held.

“A combined total of 21 lives are reported to have been lost in both tragedies, but you know that it’s not just here in South Africa that ecological degradation and climate change are a constant concern,” she said. “It is a threat that the world as we know it—or thought that we knew it—will no longer exist.”

She concluded her address with a call for missional imagination, action and, most of all, hope.

“Sisters and brothers, the work of transformation is not only the work of those at the high echelons of power,” she said. “God’s creation is not for exploitation but we must be in harmony so we can live together and rise in life.”

Active hope should be high on the agenda of the CWM Assembly, she concluded.

“Hope is based on the promise of God to all humanity, and it is based on the promise of salvation to all,” she said. “In this sense, hope is the relationship to the faith that can be articulated.”



CWM General Secretary:

“Mission has an important role reclaiming human faith”



In an address to 250 delegates and ecumenical visitors at the CWM Assembly in Durban, CWM General Secretary Rev. Dr Jooseop Keum offered a summary of key achievements and journeys that CWM has taken since the last assembly in 2020, and outlined some future directions for CWM's missional journey.

After thanking the African hosts of the Assembly, Keum noted the deep resonance of holding the Assembly in Africa.

“The African context, marked by a history of colonisation, oppression, and the fight for independence, has created a unique brand of theology that resonates with the collective yearning for freedom and dignity,” he said. “South Africa, especially, has been a leader in the Black Theology of Liberation.”

Some studies show that, by the year 2050, Africa alone will be home to more than 40% of Christians in the world.

“CWM is working in order to shift the center of ecumenism from Euro-centric to global Christianity,” he said.

Eight years have passed since the last CWM Assembly because of the interruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. “Most religious communities, especially churches, were severely impacted by the pandemic,” said Keum. “Driven by greed and self-centeredness, the rich and powerful nations kept the vaccines for themselves, while other nations were deprived of vaccines and oxygen cylinders.”

While most of those with money and resources have survived, the poor and oppressed have fallen prey to this pandemic.

“We thank God that we have never given up our calling for mission during this most challenging period, and we have remained resilient and hopeful. It was all possible by the grace of God.”

A Deeply Wounded World

Keum went on to reflect that, even as people have been able to reconvene, the world is yet deeply wounded. “As we gather for the CWM Assembly 2024, how can we spread the news that the power of God’s love is far superior to that of the necropolitics of the Empire, the power of life before death?” he asked. “Despite all these challenges, the CWM community has displayed great resilience and commitment to resisting life-denying forces and fostering life-flourishing communities.”

And the journey of transformation is not yet complete, he added.

“CWM affirms togetherness as the core of existence and methodology that is inclusive, participatory, and empowering in carrying out our mission,” he said. “It calls for collaboration, mutuality, and partnership among member churches as siblings in Christ.”

He cited CWM’s values of justice in relationships, mutuality, equality, and interdependence as guiding principles for fostering unity.

“Empire, as a system of interconnected powers, denies the sovereignty of God,” Keum said. “It identifies itself as god with the rich and powerful and claims to bring life and prosperity.”

But in reality, it is a false god who perpetuates inequality, exploitation, war, and destruction, Keum said. “As a global CWM family, we need to think critically about how we empower ourselves and our communities to transform the power.”

Prophetic Voices

As he focused on the future, Keum discussed the theology and the strategy behind the new CWM framework. “Mission has an important role in reclaiming

human faith, and the powerful stories and testimonies of God’s people,” he said. “We meet face-to-face and we share our testimony.”

He pledged to strengthen CWM’s partnerships across the world. “We do not walk alone! We strongly believe that any journey toward justice, peace, and life cannot be walked alone,” he said. “It requires the strength of unity, the wisdom of collaboration, and the grace of God’s guiding hand.”

Speaking truth to power is not enough, he said. “Prophetic voices and movements must rise up to confront the idolatries, injustices, and violence of Babylon, offering alternative visions and practices of hope and liberation,” he urged. “The world is yearning for alternative leadership that will reconcile the broken and troubled world.”

What does it mean to work together toward life “in a world where injustice and violence seem almost insuperable, where hatred and racism seem to thrive, and where suffering is so widespread and terrifying, our discipleship is costly?” he asked. “We are also called to realise the power of togetherness in resisting the empire.”

Amidst exploitation and oppression, it is important for God’s people to rise up together, he urged. “We need to recognise the power of people’s movements and the strength that comes from joining together in the struggle against injustice and inequality,” he said. “Finally, we must transform the power dynamics within our communities by acknowledging the complicity and complacency of religious institutions.”

Keum concluded with a biblical foundation for how the Risen Lord calls us to be a transforming community in mission. “We say to the CWM family, ‘You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden (Mt 5:14),’” he said. “May the God of life bless and empower us to be the living witnesses of the promise of the reign of God!”

CWM 2024 Assembly: Ecumenical partners send greetings



The Council for World Mission (CWM) Assembly not only sees the gathering of member churches across six regions, it also brings together valued partners and ecumenical friends and supporters from across the world.

Ecumenical partners have played an important role in journeying with CWM, breaking new grounds and breaching frontiers in the missiological movement.

We feature some excerpts of the greetings from our ecumenical partners below.

All Africa Conference of Churches (AACC)

This General Assembly is very important as it brings together people of God from different parts of the world under the compelling theme “Rise to life: Together in Transformation.” The theme reminds us of our missional and ecumenical calling to be intentional in our

prophetic actions that give transformed and flourishing life to all people of God.

The AACC is most delighted to be in life-flourishing partnership with the CWM. It is indeed a life-giving friendship demonstrated in many ways and forms.

Rev. Dr. Fidom Mwombeki, General Secretary, AACC

South African Council of Churches (SACC)

Your gathering here in Durban, after the challenges of COVID, eight years since your last physical Assembly, is a testament to your faith in God and your confidence in the agency of the people of this country and continent.

The SACC is looking forward not only to hear the results of your General Assembly but to be influenced by such results through its member churches who



are in this assembly. Most of all the SACC is looking forward to work with the Council for World Mission in ways that affirm the power of life and acting together in Transformation.

Rev. Mzwandile Molo, Acting General Secretary, SACC

Community of Churches in Mission (Cevaa)

It is a great joy and an honor to participate in your General Assembly, the first in-person in eight years. It is certain that after the time of the COVID-19 pandemic, we got used to seeing each other through a screen. Fortunately, these tools exist, but nothing replaces the real meeting and in person.

CWM and Cevaa have been collaborating for 24 years. Our links are strong and our exchanges regular. I give thanks here for the work carried out by our predecessors. Today we want to create new forms of training together for a wider audience. We need to encourage and support each other.

Rev. Claudia Schulz, General Secretary, Cevaa

World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC)

Your theme, Rise to Life: Together in Transformation, is very refreshing at a time such as this. The forces of injustice that have tied down and dealt death to all of God's creation: human beings and other forms of creation, continue to have such a strong hold in the world today. The Good News of the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ [however] inspires us to affirm that the forces of death do not have the last word.

We in the WCRC are together with you in the quest for transformation. Here in this Assembly most of our programme staff are here as part of our partnership with you, leading workshops and engaging together with you in affirming we are called to Rise to Life and to engage together in Transformation.

We pray for God's guidance and great outcomes for this Assembly.

Let us continue to work as effective partners in God's mission: Rise to Life: Together in Transformation.

Rev. Dr Setri Nyomi, General Secretary, World Communion of Reformed Churches

“Transforming Power” means transforming education, Urges Prof. Verene Shepherd



***Everyone is crying out for peace
None is crying out for justice.***

With these lyrics from Peter Tosh’s 1977 reggae song “Equal Rights” ringing over the audience, Prof. Verene Shepherd took the stage to reflect on the CWM Assembly sub-theme “Transforming Power.”

Shepherd is the Professor Emerita of History and Gender Studies at The University of the West Indies, Jamaica. She is also the current Chair of the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination.

“Transforming Power” vital pursuing equality, Shepherd said, “because unfortunately Babylon does not want peace or justice.”

Transformative education is practiced pedagogically in ways that help students become sustainable, diverse, conscientious global citizens with the ability to problem-solve complex issues for a more equitable and viable world.

Shepherd explained how the practice has been put in place at The University of the West Indies. “It started as one campus but has now expanded to five campuses across the region,” she said, describing how transformative education has resulted in the psychological rehabilitation of people still traumatized by a 400-year history of slavery and brutality.

“Yes, colonialism has disfigured us, and we need to use all means at our disposal to first rehabilitate ourselves,” said Shepherd.

Transformative education employs “power for” not “power over”—meaning power is grounded in human rights.

Though transformative education, “The University of the West Indies, like many other universities, has managed to demonstrate the importance of a social justice agenda,” said Shepherd.

“The younger generation of scholars have carried on the tradition of research, introducing new topics but always with the goal of keeping a more liberated self in mind,” she said.

Reparation A Quest for Justice

The University of the West Indies is also focused on reparation, as is a significant portion of CWM’s Onesimus Project, which seeks to address the roots of racialised inequalities and injustices within the CWM family of church and the wider world.

Shepherd cautioned CWM delegates and partners to not imprison themselves in the walls of academia. “Go out to schools, interview the communities, publish books, integrate more with other communities, and link with social advocates,” she urged.

As Shepherd concluded, she asked the audience to join in singing a second reggae song, the 1976 Bob Marley song “War,” which is based on a quote from former Emperor of Ethiopia Haile Selassie.

That until the philosophy which holds one race superior and another inferior is finally and permanently discredited and abandoned; that until there are no longer first-class and second class citizens of any nation; that until the color of a man’s skin is of no more significance than the color of his eyes; that until the basic human rights are equally guaranteed to all without regard to race; that until that day, the dream of lasting peace and world citizenship and the rule of international morality will remain but a fleeting illusion, to be pursued but never attained.

Shepherd urged the CWM delegates and guests to be of good courage in trying to transform power.

“Despite your collective work and successes, the world indeed seems topsy turvy,” she acknowledged. “But we are here in South Africa. We are in a country that shows what courage can do because South Africans stood up to apartheid and challenged injustice and hate.”

Revisioning Mission requires “dirtified theology”



For Pasifika, “dirt is the consciousness of the people,” said Rev. Dr. Luma Upolu Vaai, Principal and Professor of Theology and Ethics at the Pacific Theological College in Suva, Fiji Islands.

What does this mean for mission? Vaai believes it means we must see “dirt communities” as critical spaces for revisioning mission—because dirt theology is grounded in the life of the Trinity.

Vaai spoke at the CWM Assembly on 17 June, during a sub-theme session on “Revisioning Mission.”

In Pasifika, dirt is the glue that bonds people to the land. “Dirt, demonized by the Christian mission, is everything to us,” said Vaai. “We are rooted in the dirt through our umbilical cords, which are buried in the dirt when we are born. We are mothered by the dirt. We are nothing without the dirt.”

We need courage to admit that there is a problem with “our” church mission, Vaai added.

“The neoliberal gods of the market came up with a convincing gospel, and created transnational corporations as their mission society to take their gospel to the ends of the earth,” he said. “The corporations then had to engineer an ideology in which local people are fated and underdeveloped, and therefore in need of salvation, which only the gods of the market can offer.”

He drew an analogy to his own family life. “I grew up in a huge, extended family of about 30-plus people who all ate from the same pot,” he said. “We grew ‘in’ together. The only way to navigate that complex world was to live with our differences.”

Similarly, mission will ultimately only succeed if it acknowledges differences—but Vaai said we seem to be in a world in which we live next to each other but we cannot live with each other.

“We see this clearly in international airport lounges, where people are together but are never together,” said Vaai. “Many times we are torn apart either by screen time, or by political, social, religious, and economic binaries. We can grow up together as long as the other doesn’t mess with my belief system and the truths I hold dear.”

Mission needs more than a one-dimensional approach, Vaai concluded.

“What is reflected here is not so much harmony without contradictions, but an affirmation that the life that God wills is not about elimination and exclusion, but about negotiating our differences and contradictions for the sake of living together – even if the other turns out to be a wolf, a venomous snake, or just an innocent child,” he said.

Young voices demand: stop tokenism—and start transformation



Three young women—from Nigeria, Palestine, and India—put a human face on what “Building Life-Flourishing Communities” really means.

They shared their stories during the sub-theme session of the CWM Assembly on 18 June, reflecting on what life is like on the ground in their communities—and how they are dealing with injustice.

Addressing trauma and fear

Habiba Juma is founder of Soraya, which nurtures young women and mothers, many of whom are growing up in the slums of Nairobi. Some are forced into early marriage; others are forced to start employment at an early age.

“They have a lot of trauma, and fear,” said Juma.

Soraya offers many services, including mentorship,

community awareness, job training, and a safe space.

One 2023 Soraya participant, Valentine Nthenya, is mother to one daughter. “Joining Soraya in 2023 transformed my life from stress and loneliness to hope and opportunity,” said Nthenya, who started a motorbike small parts business to support her daughter. “Soraya has taught me to let go of the past, love our children, and pursue my goals.”

Cries from Palestine

Muna Nassar, a Palestinian Christian from Bethlehem, has been a longterm advocate for the justice of the Palestinian people through her education, work, and writing.

“Being born in Bethlehem I always felt a sense of pride to be born in the same place Jesus was born,” she said—but she is seriously grappling with the situation

on the ground today, where 37,000 have been killed in Gaza.

“They have been made into statistics,” she said.

“We want to say: but this was a child, and she was a mother, and he was a great father—not a ‘thing’ bound to die a gruesome death in a devastated city but a child who would have grown up by the sea with a loving family.”

3,000 years of injustice

Priyanka Samy is a Dalit feminist activist based in India.

“Our bodies, our dignity, our rights, continue to be unabashedly betrayed in life and death,” she said. “The caste system is 3,000 years old. Yes, you heard that right—3,000 years old!”

She estimated there are 270 million Dalits worldwide.

“The practice of caste, it is very important to note, is widely pervasive not only in South Asia, but across the globe to the South Asian diaspora,” she said. “I want you to hear this: Most often, people from the upper castes—the privileged classes—occupy influential positions in our churches across South Asia. Our churches are patriarchal and casteist institutions.”

Samy also tied together the three presentations by demanding not just local but global justice. “We live in times where struggles for social justice and equity converge, revealing inherent similarities between issues,” she said. “Churches have an urgent call to move from tokenistic solidarities to transformational solidarities.”



Workshops examine pressing world challenges, pose tough questions



1 5 June marked the start of a series of 16 workshops where Assembly participants could be challenged by various speakers who shared their experiences and stories.

The speakers presented their topics in stark and pointed ways that challenged the beliefs, perceptions, and worldviews of the participants while simultaneously posing tough questions that invited rigorous dialogue and discussions.

Six workshops kicked off the series:

Education Transforming Power

Led by Rev. Dr Seforosa Carroll, Academic Dean and Lecturer in Cross Cultural Ministry and Theology at the United Theological College, School of Theology, Charles Sturt University, Australia, the session sought to ask, discern, and name intersecting threads that create and/or perpetuate the misuse of power.

Gender: Leadership and Power

Programme Coordinator for Gender Justice at the World Communion of Reformed Churches, Rev.

Dr Minwoo Oh's workshop on gender, leadership, and power provided a welcoming, safe space for participants to share their experiences of gendering and gendered leadership and power dynamics in their own contexts, whether within the church or in broader society.

Racism, Power, and Privilege

Rev. Philip Vinod Peacock, Executive Secretary, Justice and Witness of the World Communion of Reformed Churches, posited that racism is often articulated through missiological language as it builds on its colonial legacies of supremacy.

Caste: Discrimination and Power

Rev. Samuel Mall, Assistant Professor in the Department of Christian Theology at Bishop's College, Kolkata, India, decried caste as the reason that divides society hierarchically, thereby creating and sustaining inequality.

Dismantling Militarised Empire

Mincing no words on a highly sensitive and often



incendiary topic, Prof. Jude Lal Fernando, Associate Professor at the School of Religion, Theology, and Peace Studies, Trinity College Dublin, bravely peeled off the veneer of the Empire that promised peace by keeping the world in a permanent state of war.

Discovering the Historical Collections of the CWM and their Potential for Future Research

CWM Archivist, Jo Ichimura, gave a concise overview of the historical collections housed in the CWM archives including case studies on research and use of the materials.

16 June featured the next five sessions namely:

Radical Hospitality as Evangelism

Rev. Dr Kenneth R. Ross, Associate Minister at Bemvu Parish, Church of Central Africa Presbyterian, in Malawi argued that to talk the language of hospitality is to go against the grain of the world in which we live.

He posited that the prevailing trend is one of protection and exclusion. Countries and communities have formed a world where those on islands of privilege defend what they have by repelling everyone else. It is a world of walls and barriers – all about keeping people out, not welcoming them in.

Affirming Life-Flourishing Spiritualities

Facilitated by Rev. Dr Amelia Koh-Butler, CWM Mission Secretary for Education, Formation, and Empowerment as well as the Pacific region, she put forth the position that as followers of the Triune God, the church holds that life flourishes when it is centred on God and not ourselves. Part of that hinged heavily on the importance of spiritual practices.

Indigenous Vision – Transformed World

Rev. Dr Seforosa Carroll facilitated her second workshop that was grounded on the premise that mission and its ties to colonialism and capitalism through the Doctrine of Discovery continue to impact Indigenous peoples globally in different ways.

Through this workshop, participants were given a unique window of opportunity to explore the Indigenous vision for a transformed world through the perspective of wholistic liberation and shared global ecumenical Indigenous concepts.

Missional Congregation – Witnessing in Public Space

Rev. Jasmijn Dijkman, from the Protestant Church in the Netherlands, is a firm believer that the CWM community is uniquely positioned to both nurture and witness to a true sense of global neighbourliness.

She came with a set of tough questions for participants in the matter of the global climate crisis during the session where she put forth the argument that the climate crisis is the culminating crisis of the depredations of the socio-economic system that CWM has aptly named Babylon.

Transformative Ecumenism: Mission from the Margins

Led by CWM Mission Secretary for Discipleship and Dialogue and the Europe region, Rev. Dr Graham McGeoch and co-facilitated by Rev. Dr Jaeshik Shin, an ordained pastor from the Presbyterian Church of Korea, the session aimed to reimagine ecumenism in response to the un-sustainability of the current global dynamics and in eagerness to nurture new opportunities for transformative Christian presence.



The workshop series concluded with the last five workshops on 17 June that including:

Mission in a Digitalised World

Rev. Dr Young-cheol Cheon, CWM Mission Secretary for Communications expressed the view that as digital transformation accelerates, the physical world with the virtual (cyber) world are integrated.

These changes and paradigm shifts bring about new ethical norms. Without a corresponding shift in consciousness or appropriate ethical standards, societal problems will likely worsen. This workshop explored alternative ethical standards from a CWM perspective to address and overcome these challenges.

Tax Justice for an Economy of Life

Rev. Philip Vinod Peacock's second workshop painted a grim outlook of a world post-economic liberalization and globalization from the 1970s as current governments are increasing privatization and reducing social spending on health and education in lieu of an economic system that is increasingly driven by profit.

The workshop thus closely examined the effect of such trends and asked the question of how an effective system of tax justice can be enacted to create a life-flourishing economy.

Building a Movement for Eco-Justice

Rev. Daimon Mkandawire, CWM Mission Secretary for Ecology and Economy, led a highly personal session as he presented a stance that outs the environmental crisis as one that is not only a physical and economic issue but deeply rooted in moral and ethical dimensions, reflecting a profound disconnection

from the principles of justice, stewardship, and care for creation.

Community De(en)velopment Towards Transformation

Rev. Dr Lesmore Gibson Ezekiel, Director of Programmes (DOP) at the All Africa Conference of Churches gave a sobering presentation of a modern world comfortable with a development culture that fosters and sustains all forms of violence, injustices, and blatant abuse of the dignity of creation, especially the brutality that characterise human relations.

As a response, participants, together with the facilitator, collectively conceptualised initiatives that will contribute towards transforming lives for the better, and also came up with methodologies that challenge life-destroying systems and structures.

Creating Space? Frustrated Youth

This session, led by CWM Deputy General Secretary, Dr Sudipta Singh, encouraged participants to be the catalyst for meaningful dialogue and action, paving the way for a mission that is more reflective of and responsive to the needs and ideals of its younger members.

Additionally, participants also worked together to identify and address the key sources of frustration among youth in mission activities and explore innovative strategies to incorporate youth perspectives effectively into mission planning and execution.

Bible studies pave way for spiritual perspectives on Assembly sub-themes



A series Bible studies marked the beginning of each day of the Assembly. The sessions were curated and presented as a companion to the day's overarching theme, leading the participants into a contemplative mood and setting the tone for the day's proceedings.

Transforming Power: Churches need to tend to power that is in the invisible

Leading the first Bible Study based on 2 Samuel 21 was Rev. Dr Monica Melanchthon, Associate Professor of Hebrew Bible/Old Testament Studies, at the Pilgrim Theological College, University of Divinity.

Melanchthon pointed out the dichotomous nature of the Christian view of power. She noted that Christians are often suspicious and guarded about power and structures/systems of power, seeing them as evil and oppressive.

"Yet we use the word 'empowerment' a fair bit in Christian liberational discourse, especially when we speak of mission to the suffering and the marginalized," said Melanchthon.

Melanchthon argued that while tyrannical and overbearing powers, be they individual, communal, structural, and systemic have to be queried, and confronted for the sake of justice, the church has to go beyond individualistic evangelism and piety and find ways to effectively name, challenge, and confront them and oppressive powers can indeed be transformed by one that is often seen and deemed as lesser.

Using the story that was told in 2 Samuel 21 when King David forcibly sacrificed seven sons of Saul the former King of Israel to the Gibeonites in compensation for the dead King's bloodguilt to them, Melanchthon related the response of Rizpah, the second wife of Saul, to the untimely deaths of her two sons.

Melanchthon interpreted the act of sacrificing the seven young men as a political power move to remove possible opposition to his throne while being at the same time seen as a spiritual act to redeem Israel in God's eyes.

Rizpah, the woman in the centre of it all, Melanchthon argued, has had no power over the fact that her sons were so brutally chosen and killed. However, instead of taking it lying down she flew in the face of oppressive power by holding a vigil over the bodies of the slain youths for months, fending off scavengers and enduring the harsh beatings of the weather. Eventually, her act paid off as the bones of the dead were eventually given a proper burial as God lifted his judgement over Israel.

"She (Rizpah) had no voice or power or wealth, but she had courage. She channeled her anger and her grief into defiant action. Any sense of victimhood which is a weapon in the hands of the oppressor/victimizer is overcome," said Melanchthon.

"[Rizpah] brought David and perhaps us as well to our theological senses, demonstrating that it is not violence and sacrifices that God wants, but mercy and human compassion."

Revisioning Mission: Putting the reign of God in context

Rev. Dr Cliff Bird, an ordained Minister of the United Church in Solomon Islands, exhorted the attending delegates to revision mission by placing the meaning of the kingdom or reign (as certain groups would prefer a non-gender specific semantic) of God in context.

Bird based his presentation on Matthew 13:31-33, 44-48 where Jesus describes the reign of God in separate parables to the disciples and using analogies of everyday life such as the mustard seed, leavened bread, and the treasure in the field, as well as common occupational actions like fishing and pearl harvesting.

"The images were reflective of prevailing socio-economic situations during Jesus' time; many of these imageries can be described as not possessing a top-down quality but a quiet and imperceptible rising (the bread, the growth of the mustard seed) from the land and sea."

Bird also astutely pointed out that, rather than employing masculine symbolisms such as war and weaponry, Jesus opted for softer, seemingly feminine and earthier ones that dealt with nurturing, growth, and the soil and ascribed their qualities to the reign of God.

Through the parables that effectively overturn the disciples' expectations of a militant and divine uprising, Bird encouraged the delegates to think along the same lines when it comes to revisioning mission: to overturn prevailing precepts of missiology and embrace mission that is contextualised and intimate.

Building Life-Flourishing Communities: To flourish life is to feed the ochlos

Dr Jin Young Choi, a Professor of New Testament and Christian Origins at the Baptist Missionary Training School kicked off the last Bible study session by acknowledging the oft-quoted African philosophy of ubuntu, that seeks the wellbeing of the whole which in turn benefits the individual.

"Life is interconnected and the self cannot flourish if others don't," said Choi, "yet the Empire would consistently defy God's will in human flourishing through economic and neoliberal policies that deny life."

Naming the source of Empire's influence as "biopower," Choi defined it as an influence that seeks to promote productivity and even the wellbeing of bodies, but only in service to neoliberalism's values of individualism, competition, and consumerism.

However, Choi posited, a way to resist the biopolitical power deployed by Empire to regulate life through various mechanisms and strategies is to consider how we may manage a commons that is essential and must be accessible to every life—food. Yet it is this very life-giving item that is often held hostage by Empire to stifle and destroy life through its unequal distribution – a fact that Jesus in the Bible knew very well.

Jesus meets the needs of the multitudes

Herod's table symbolised the economic-political might of the Roman Empire with its nigh limitless luxuries that of which Jesus was only too aware.

The feeding of the multitudes is a parable that has been retold many times yet Choi has one unique take on it – that which reflected Jesus' rejection of the commodification of food when despite the logical pushback from the disciples to feed the crowd (It would cost "two hundred denarii" to buy bread to feed the hungry ochlos (crowd) (Matthew 6:37)). He made sure that the basic human need to be fed was met even under what seemed to be an impossible circumstance by performing one of His most well-known miracles.

No worldly economic model could hope to stand in the way of Jesus' salvific work.

Jesus: the ultimate food that gives life

Yet the greatest tragedy of the fallen world is that no matter how many miracles that Jesus may perform in His earthly ministry, the Empire that seeks to kill and destroy will always leave the hungry and the thirsty in its wake.

In the face of this, Jesus performed the ultimate miracle, the giving of Himself as the bread and water of life through His death on the cross, His body broken so that the hunger of the world was sated and thirst slaked permanently.

"Buying bread for the poor or pain medicine for the sick is insufficient. We are invited to perceive the mystery in broken bodies. To rise to life, to build life-flourishing communities, we discern those bodies have the agency to be alive and the power to resist the peremptory power that controls bodies and lives," Choi concluded.

From Poetry to Programmes, regional stories bring new insights and tales of unity in diversity and ecological struggles

“Stories from the Region” – a two-day segment that unfolded at the CWM Assembly over 17-18 June, saw regional delegates showcasing local missional achievements as well as highlighting contextual challenges and struggles.

Regions are highlighted in the order in which they presented.

Europe

Representatives of the Congregational Federation, Presbyterian Church in Wales, Protestant Church in the Netherlands, United Reformed Church, and Union of Welsh Independents offered a series of prayers, as well as Psalm and poetry readings, that expressed their outlook, challenges, and hopes.

As part of a prayer of lament, they acknowledged: “We were born into a ruthless, world-consuming system. We know that every day we fail to stop this system. We fall short in acting and failing to act.”

They also shared a series of Psalm readings, as well as a poem commemorating Pride month, and reflecting the challenges of the LGBTQ+ community.



The poem read, in part:

Rise up, o Lord, with love's embrace,
Let justice shine, and let hate erase,
For in each color, there's a plea,
A world where all can live and be free.

South Asia

The Church of Bangladesh, Church of North India, Church of South India, and Presbyterian Church of India gathered onstage to highlight their programmes and challenges.



The Church of Bangladesh spoke of the challenges of climate change impacts, waves of fundamentalism, and generating revenue, among many other challenges. “Yet amidst these trials the church stands resilient,” said the narrator of a slide show. The slide show also highlighted ten major strategic ministries focusing on pastoral care and self-sustainability.

The Church of North India offered an overview of major demographics as well as programmes that focused on equipping pastors, empowering women, and training Sunday School teachers, among many other initiatives.

The Church of South India's slide show depicted its cultural vibrancy, and the foundation of the Church of South India as a missional church. Programmes highlighted included training Sunday School teachers, communications, and many others.

The Presbyterian Church of India named unemployment as a major challenge facing its communities, and shared its aims "to empower women and youth with targeted community initiatives." The Presbyterian Church of India also shared programmes it operates to curb substance abuse among youth. "Health is a top priority, aligning with moral and social concerns," stated the narrator.

Caribbean

The United Church in Jamaica and the Cayman Islands, and Guyana Congregational Union began with lively music and a slide show, then presented some programme highlights.



The United Church in Jamaica and the Cayman Islands offered an overview of the Mt Olivet Boys' Home, with the following mission: "To provide a loving, safe, nurturing environment that will enable our children to be physically, spiritually, emotionally, and intellectually prepared to maximize their potential and to make a worthwhile contribution to society."

The school accommodates up to 40 boys and operates primarily on donations.

The Guyana Congregational Union spoke about developing a child policy as well as creating a space for people 65 years and older to engage in social activities, to gain access to information, and to share best practices for improving the health and welfare of seniors.

East Asia

The region's member churches sans the Presbyterian Church of Myanmar (the delegates were unfortunately not present due to the tense local military situation) took turns to head to the stage to highlight their stories of successful programmes and projects and to solicit prayers for their future initiatives.

The common thread from the churches in East Asia was unity in diversity and the outreach of fringe and vulnerable people groups.

Gereja Presbyterian Malaysia (GPM) and the Presbyterian Church in Singapore (PCS) both highlighted their works towards vulnerable groups with the former showcasing their outreach efforts to the Malaysian Indigenous peoples and the educating them of their land rights, while the latter updated on their work in the setting up of a synod in Cambodia, bringing the Good News of Jesus to lands beyond Singapore.



At home, PCS was also hard at work in attending to the rapidly aging population as well as the engagement of youths with special needs via training the youths to become eldercare aides as a possible solution to the employment challenges that peoples of special needs face in the country.

Both Hong Kong Council of the Church of Christ in China (HKCCCC) and The Presbyterian Church of Korea (PCK) highlighted similar interest areas of their churches. HKCCCC sought to empower women through education and having inclusive spaces for the disabled and persons with special needs. Similarly, PCK illustrated its three-pronged approach towards fostering life-flourishing in creation, youth, and women through programmes that empower, include, and drive awareness.

The Presbyterian Church in Taiwan (PCT) also highlighted key issues facing the church in Taiwan, namely the prevalence of natural disasters such as typhoons and earthquakes as well as PCT's response towards them. PCT's works in the engagement of Indigenous people via the Indigenous language revival

programme was also showcased. The audience was also told of PCT's efforts in being a key player amidst Taiwan's challenging geopolitical relationship with China with the church providing civil defence training to its members amongst other related programmes.

The presentation took on a sombre tone when the audience was shown a quick video presentation on the situation in Myanmar as the Assembly sought the participants' prayers for the Presbyterian Church of Myanmar (PCM). A second short video presentation illustrated that despite the highly traumatic situation at home, the community of PCM nevertheless continued with Christ's work through vocational training of the youths and women and the initiatives that support displaced people due to the on-going armed conflict between the local militia and the junta government.

Pacific

The ten churches of the Pacific region took to the stage as a collective body as a show of unity and solidarity shared amongst the small but resilient island nations.

They presented a short walkthrough of the histories behind each island's encounter with missionaries that have brought the Gospel to them.

Subsequently, they presented on the four major threats facing the region: climate change, nuclear testing, deep sea mining, and mental health issues plaguing the islander youths.



Climate change

Despite being a region that has contributed the least to the ever-worsening situation of climate change, the Pacific region has endured the worst of it with the threats of rising sea levels, changing weather patterns, soil erosion, and increasing salination of their waters. The islands have had to grapple with all four of these threats in varying degrees leading to widespread sufferings and displacement. In particular, the rising sea levels have continued to engulf parts of the Pacific, heralding the possibility of the region being the first to produce climate refugees.

Nuclear testing

The Pacific has been the site of rampant nuclear testing led by the global north. The countries responsible for the wanton testing have consistently evaded calls for reparations and for the activities to cease.

These atrocities have already taken their toll on the region's sensitive biodiversity as well as resulting in many islanders losing their homes due to polluted food sources and unsafe living environments.

Deep sea mining

Another commercial activity that continues to plague the region is the presence of deep sea mining. While many may have read about the benefits of the resources being harvested via this maritime operation, it is nevertheless highly intrusive and destructive to the region's ecology. Research have until now been inconclusive as to the long-term effects of deep sea mining but the Pacific islanders themselves are alone in bearing the brunt of the consequences from unsettled seabeds to the eradication of important food sources, thereby threatening local livelihoods and ways of life.

Mental and physical health challenges and crime

An oft-overlooked issue that the Pacific is facing is the declining state of mental health amongst the youths of the islands today. Youth hopelessness has been leading to increasing cases of depression and social isolation. The region's suicide rates have, as a result, increased to worrying levels, putting the region's youths at risk and threatening the future stability of the region.

The Pacific is also being used as a common drug trafficking route, leading to a secondary threat of crimes and social problems such as substance abuse and addiction. The Pacific is also struggling with rising levels of obesity amongst the locals with no clear solution in sight.

CWM Assembly, with statements and commissioning, draws to a close



CWM adopted an Assembly Statement that reflects the missiological meaning of the gathering in Durban, South Africa, from 12-19 June, under the theme “Rise to Life: Together in Transformation.”

“With its struggles for emancipation and dignity, Africa provided a youthful and inspiring context for an Assembly focussed on rising to life,” reads the statement. “In face of socio-political catastrophe and environmental emergency, the Assembly heard the call to rise to life and be together in transformation.”

The statement acknowledged that the Assembly was led by the voices and actions of young people.

In the section “Transforming Power,” the statement reads: “We are called to be agents of transformation,

resisting oppressive powers, and embodying alternative ways of living and being.”

Under “Revisioning Mission,” the message notes: “We are called to attend to the signs of the times, discerning the Spirit of life and God’s call to mission today.”

Related to “Life-Flourishing Communities,” the statement reads: “We are called to engage in practices that reflect resurrection life, building life-flourishing communities.”

In conclusion, with a section entitled “Rise to Life,” the statement acknowledges: “The unity we seek is not achieved through our own efforts. Rather, it is the Holy Spirit who unites, inspiring our spiritual commitment.”

A more extensive missiological statement will be developed following comments received by the CWM delegates, who are encouraged to email their comments to graham.mcgeoch@cwmission.org

Statement on Myanmar

The CWM Assembly adopted a statement and joined in prayer on the situation in Myanmar, expressing great sadness at the absence of the Presbyterian Church of Myanmar.

“The member churches shared their distress at the situation in Myanmar and the Assembly condemned all forms of violence, systemic discrimination against civilians, and communal tensions,” reads the statement. “CWM laments the lack of medical facilities, the effects of COVID, and the impact of the military coup on the people of Myanmar.”

Closing Service and Commissioning

A closing service full of music and a dramatic rendition of Romans 12:1-21, allowed CWM delegates and friends to close their gathering in a spirit of prayer.

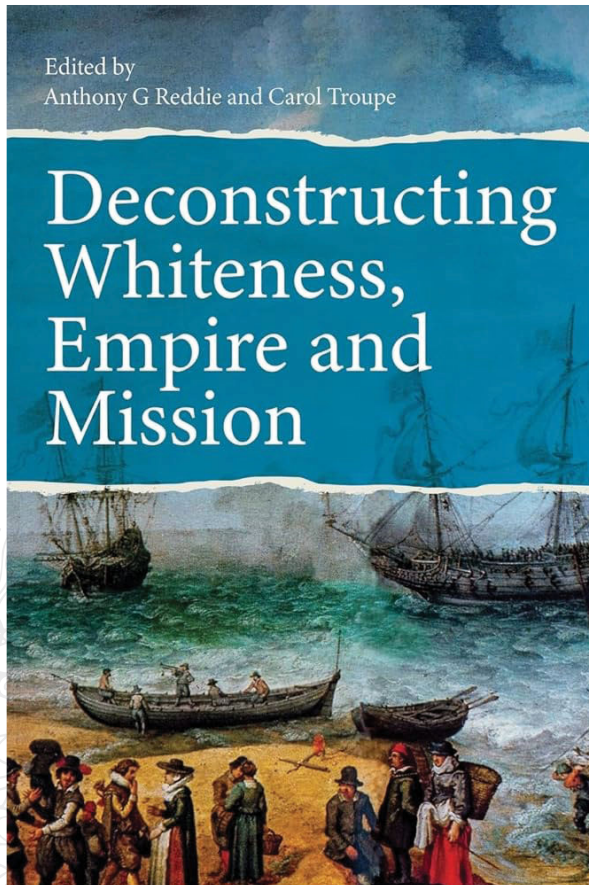
Moderator-designate Dr Ming-Chu Lin offered a sermon on the Kingdom of God, which she acknowledged may seem far off in today's world of grave challenges.

“There are refugees who do not dare to hope that they will be accepted by the world. There are people who have been oppressed for generations,” she said. “Nevertheless, to be Christian is to be filled with hope, regardless of the challenges that we face.”

She reflected that a foundational aspect of mission is to encourage people—children of God, God's family—to respect and honor each other. “May we continue to encourage each other,” she said.

During the closing service, new leaders of the CWM were commissioned, ushering in a new chapter for CWM.

CWM launches book exploring empire, mission, and white privilege



The Council for World Mission (CWM) London office hosted, on 1 July, 20 representatives from the member churches in the Europe region as well as ecumenical partners in a launch of a book born of the work from the Legacies of Slavery project (now The Onesimus Project) entitled, “Deconstructing Whiteness, Empire and Mission.”

The book, wholly funded by CWM, was coedited by Prof. Anthony Reddie from the University of Oxford, and Dr Carol Troupe of the Queen’s Foundation. Both were lead researchers on the CWM Legacies of Slavery project.

The launch, organised by the CWM Programme team and the staff of the London office, gave the attendees a closer look at the academic publication exploring the relationships between whiteness, empire, and mission.

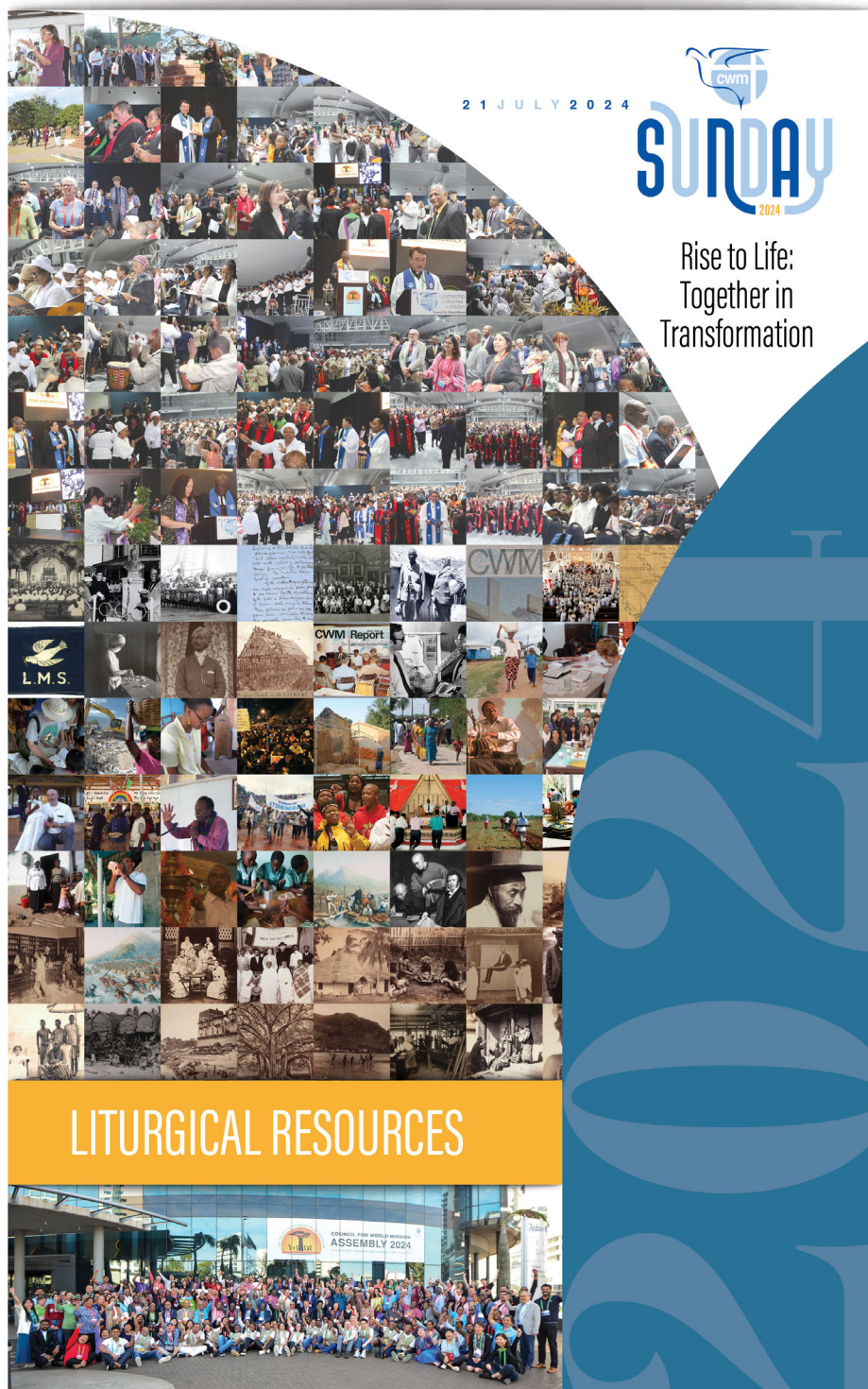
The 368-page book, comprised of epistemological writings, personal anecdotes, and reflections, invites persons who identify themselves as academics, practitioners, and activists, predominantly White people in Britain, to explore and ponder upon the contested dynamics of empire and mission and the central roles that White privilege, entitlement, and power have played in shaping modern history and the contemporary world.

It seeks to push forward the thesis that it is futile to engage in genuine Christian mission without first coming to terms with the bloody legacies of European colonialism while at the same time, exploring the methods by which theological education can be decolonised.

“I welcome this groundbreaking publication, fruit of CWM’s The Onesimus Project. Prof. Anthony Reddie and Dr Carol Troupe have curated essays on Black Theology and dismantling Whiteness in academia and mission. A number of essays advocate for a decolonisation of theological curriculum, a priority for CWM, through its education for liberation work. I recommend this book to churches and missiologists,” said Rev. Dr Jooseop Keum, CWM General Secretary.

CWM Sunday 2024:

Rise to Life – Together in Transformation



For CWM Sunday on 21 July 2024, CWM invited its member churches and partners to commemorate the day using the newly released liturgical resources under the theme “Rise to Life—Together in Transformation.”

In light of devastating landslides in Papua New Guinea, reiterated the call for continued prayers and support for the affected communities. CWM urged all member churches and partners to incorporate prayers for Papua New Guinea into their CWM Sunday services.

CWM encouraged the distribution of liturgical resources to local churches, making worship more meaningful and fostering global solidarity.



Scan the QR code to download CWM Sunday 2024 Liturgical Resources.

CWM celebrates 47 years with intergenerational joy



Forty-seven years ago, on 18 July, CWM was inaugurated as a mission organisation. To commemorate the special day, staff members of the Singapore office made a special visit to the Singapore Life Church, where they spent time with 40 senior citizens in activities including exercises, a short quiz, and a singalong session where all belted out classic Christian hymns in praise of God.

The mostly Mandarin-speaking senior citizens were a part of the Life Recreation Centre – a social concern initiative by the Singapore Life Church that provides a safe space for the elderly to interact with their contemporaries and be engaged in Christian fellowship. The centre has been operating for 12 years and ministers to a thriving community of over 100 senior citizens who hang out from 9am to 4pm, Tuesdays to Fridays.

The Singapore staff arrived early in the morning at the centre and were immediately given a warm welcome by the elderly members. The celebrations then kicked off with an invigorating round of exercises that saw many staff being challenged in sets of movements that required a keen sense of coordination and focus – qualities that were surprisingly present in the spritely group of old folks.

Rev. Julie Sim, CWM Mission Secretary for Mission Programme and Partnership, gave a brief presentation of how Singapore Life Church is intrinsically linked to CWM through ties formed from early Presbyterian missionaries who were sent to Singapore by CWM's organisational predecessor, the London Missionary Society. The church was the result of decades of faithful church-planting by the Presbyterian community that also yielded the close relationship that is still

shared between the denomination and CWM to this day.

“Coming here is akin to returning home,” described Sim as she also quizzed the elderly participants on a series of questions where prizes were given out to the competitive old folks who were eager to give the right answers amidst raucous laughter and wide smiles.

The seniors were also treated to a lively skit by Rev. Amelia Koh-Butler, Mission Secretary for Education and Empowerment, who regaled the audience with her skills in theatrics as she retold Jesus’ parable of the Good Shepherd.

CWM General Secretary Rev. Dr Jooseop Keum presented a special gift to Elder Wang, the founder of the Life Care Society, a community outreach ministry of Singapore Life Church—which was established in 1883 by the London Missionary Society.

The staff then broke for lunch with the seniors as they shared tables and exchanged stories with each other. The generations closed their gaps through conversations over a meal, ending a memorable event that highlights how life-flourishing communities can also be fostered in the golden years.

CWM Sunday 2024

Every year, the CWM community commemorates CWM's inauguration as a mission organisation on a Sunday close to 18 July.

In this year's 47th anniversary celebration, CWM member churches and partners commemorated CWM Sunday on 21 July using or incorporating the liturgical resources.

Dr Natalie Lin, CWM Moderator, is an academic, teacher, and faith leader in one



Dr Natalie Lin of the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan (PCT) was elected as the Moderator of the Council for World Mission (CWM) for the next four years, taking over for her predecessor, Rt Rev. Lydia Neshangwe.

As she moves to chart the course for CWM in a world that is increasingly darkened by wars, injustices, and life-denying, death-dealing practices, Lin expressed appreciation for the support of the CWM family.

"I am very thankful for the support and encouragement that was heaped upon me from the delegates and representatives present at the Assembly," said Lin. "It is my humble and earnest prayer that the Holy Spirit equip me daily to serve with joy and praise."

An advocate of education

Lin's faith journey was seeded by her mother, who

played an influential role in building her spiritual foundations. Lin served as a Sunday School teacher and contributed to an active youth ministry in her church.

In fact, her faithful ministry in her local church would prove to be the bedrock upon which she would build a lifelong career in academia, convinced of the societal benefits that could be wrought from a solid education.

Lin immersed herself in years of study. After earning a doctorate from Columbia University, she began teaching the next generation of Christian ministers at Taiwan Theological Seminary and Chang Rong University.

For the past 20 years, Lin has also been volunteering as a lecturer at the Yu Shan Theological Seminary in Hua Lian, a Presbyterian institution that specialises in the clerical training of ministers of Indigenous origins.

Key priorities

Lin lists two key priorities that will inform her CWM leadership decisions.

“One of my top priorities as Moderator is the fostering of a spirit of unity amongst the various stakeholders of CWM – to be one in Christ – where we can fully fulfil our roles in this global ecumenical family,” said Lin, who believes strongly that having a united spirit in Christ is a key ingredient in the success of any ecumenical institution.

The other matter of importance to Lin is not only re-acquainting CWM Member Churches with each other but helping them building deeper partnerships by learning from the past and understanding each other’s rationales for the present and the future.

“This is so that we may collectively improve upon and deepen future collaborative relations and to bear good witness to the rest of the community,” she explained.

One body in Christ

Lin is known for consistently having an applicable Bible verse or message to share for moments at hand – including a look ahead of her term with CWM.

“Jesus said that where He is, so too would his disciples be. May we always be cognizant of the places where Jesus would tread and be engaged in work that would bring Him joy and glory,” Lin charged, while leafing through the Bible, pausing at Mark 12:1-2 and 1 Corinthians 12:12-27, quotations that both proclaim the utmost need of a faith-based organisation to be fully focussed on service to God and to stay united as one Body of Christ.

“In an ecumenical organisation such as CWM, every member comes from all walks of life, but a common thread that unites us all is Jesus Christ. Let us therefore, continue to support one another in the spirit of Jesus,” exhorted Lin.

CWM gathers for post-Assembly all-staff meeting



Staff members from all three Council for World Mission (CWM) regional offices gathered for an all-staff meeting on 25 July where employees from the London and South African branches joined virtually with their Singaporean peers via Zoom.

This was the first all-staff meeting since the conclusion of the CWM Assembly in June and it also marked the inaugural physical meeting between newly minted CWM Moderator Dr Natalie Lin and the rest of the CWM staff as she made her first stopover to the Singapore office in a three-day visit.

Moderator greetings

As part of her greetings—many meeting her for the very first time in person—Lin once again voiced her gratitude for the support that she enjoyed en route to her electoral success.

“I really want to thank all of you for giving me this great opportunity to get to know you more closely, and also to learn how to serve God in this CWM family,” said Lin. “If it were not for the warm friendship, support, and prayers of all of you, I would not be able to have this wonderful opportunity to serve in this ministry.”

“I thank God as well in calling me to represent my local church, the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan (PCT) in this season when I can work and learn together with all our partners in the universal church to raise up the kingdom of God.”

Reflections about the Assembly

CWM Deputy General Secretary, Dr Sudipta Singh, presented his keynote address for the meeting which encapsulated his reflections on the Assembly that was widely acclaimed to be a success by the attending delegates.

The keynote took on an introspective tone as Singh gave a heartfelt and profound look back on the Assembly and its far-reaching influence on future CWM projects and planning.

Singh condensed the Assembly experience into four emergent theological themes that ran through much of the event:

- Justice instead of hierarchy/patriarchy
- People’s power instead of Imperial power
- Resurrection instead of death
- Hope instead of despair

Singh then further expounded on the themes and emphasised the importance of the church's role in furthering God's justice by rising up to confront and dismantle oppressive structures, serving as harbingers of hope for oppressed communities, sharing the strength of resistance, speaking truth to power, and possessing the will to embody a "dirtified theology of mission" as the church becomes the vanguard for ecological and social justice.

A look into GreenFaith

The all-staff meeting also extended a special invitation to Rev. Fletcher Harper, Executive Director of GreenFaith, to give an introductory presentation on the crucial work that the organisation has done to further the cause of climate and ecological justice. GreenFaith is a multi-faith, grassroots community committed to rouse a moral awakening to the sacredness of Earth and the dignity of all people by appealing to global bodies to turn away from the rampant conquests, extractions, and exploitations of the world's resources and allow for the spirit of cooperation and community to thrive.

It echoes CWM's longstanding campaign to build life-flourishing communities and destroy death-dealing corporate practices. GreenFaith and CWM seek to move against new and insidious fossil fuel/extractive projects and related financing, and support a just transition, the creation of green jobs, and the prevention of loss and damage caused to climate-vulnerable regions.

"I would encourage CWM members to learn about the different fuel fossil development projects underway in the different regions where you work," said Harper.

"Listen to the stories and the voices of those who are being hurt and displaced by these projects and learn and think about the ways that your member churches can become involved in the multi-faith resistance and movement for climate justice."

The Lord is our portion, cup, and security

The meeting was closed by Dr Natalie Lin with a sharing from Psalm 16 that detailed King David's perspective on his relationship with God.

In the psalm, David identifies God to be the source of his security and sustenance and at the same time acknowledges God's faithfulness towards him.

In the same vein, Lin candidly credited God for blessing her with a fresh new direction and season in her life post-retirement with her new CWM appointment. She exhorted the CWM staff to also hold onto the faith of God's plan for each of their lives, and no matter the age or life stage, that they may be in, they can always find renewal in Jesus Christ.

Vision forms for expanding Transformative Ecumenism Movement



The Transformative Ecumenism Steering Group, established to promote the Transformative Ecumenism Movement worldwide, gathered in Bangkok from 27-28 July to discuss strategies and plans for expanding the movement into a broader global context. This was the Steering Group's first in-person gathering since the launch of Transformative Ecumenism in Nairobi in August 2023. CWM General Secretary Rev. Dr Jooseop Keum welcomed the members of the Steering Group, who represent regions including Africa, Asia, Europe, Latin America, and the Pacific.

In his opening remarks, Keum expressed his profound gratitude to the members of the Steering Group for their commitment to the Transformative Ecumenism Movement. While sharing his personal experiences and challenges, he encouraged the members to continue expanding the vision to address the challenges faced by the global community. Emphasising CWM's commitment, Keum said, "Decolonising mission and ecumenism is one of CWM's primary focus areas in doing the mission."

CWM Deputy General Secretary Dr Sudipta Singh also thanked the Steering Group and assured them of CWM's continued support in promoting and strengthening the Transformative Ecumenism Movement.

The Steering Group members, coordinated by Rev. Dr Deenabandhu Manchala, have met several times virtually and brought forth proposals for expanding the concept and scope of the Transformative Ecumenism Movement, developing a communication strategy, mapping and networking, and working alongside The Onesimus Project, which seeks to address the roots of racialised inequalities and injustices within the CWM family of church and the wider world.

The Steering Group collectively emphasised the need to further develop Transformative Ecumenism into a "movement of movements" and stressed the urgent necessity of involving more young people from diverse regions and contexts who are committed to addressing contemporary global challenges. They also recognised the importance of collaborating with other movements that are already addressing challenges in their respective contexts and developing regional expressions.

The Steering Group plans to hold another global gathering in 2025 in solidarity with communities struggling for peace and stability in the Middle East. There are also concrete plans to develop a global youth forum to provide a continuous platform for young people to address the challenges they face.

Training in Mission programme kicks off at Union Theological Seminary in Philippines



The Training in Mission Programme (TIM) – Diploma in Mission Studies is a Council for World Mission (CWM) programme that provides opportunities for young adults to learn about Christian mission through theory and practice via classes, exposure visits, projects, and hands-on work in various regional contexts.

A programme that has been established for over 40 years, it is a TIM hallmark that graduates are equipped with leadership skills that put them in good stead for service to the church and God's mission.

The 2024 intake recently gathered 10 participants from the various CWM regions for an immersion trip in the Philippines, constituting the last leg of the programme which began as a series of online classes. The participants were selected to achieve an optimal gender and regional representation.

The immersion trip in the Philippines saw the young students spending two weeks in the Union Theological Seminary. Throughout their stay, students were introduced to five key principles that form the backbone of Christian missiology – Tell, Teach, Tend, Transform, and Treasure.

They were also introduced to the rich heritage of the Union Theological Seminary and had the opportunities to partake in local activities such as the “Laksamba” (prayer walk) and learning about useful, colloquial phrases in Filipino.

Being residents at the seminary also enabled the students to glean a clearer perspective of the local contextual challenges to sustainability and self-sufficiency through exposures to initiatives such as groundwater extraction and local food productions that espoused the importance of reducing carbon footprints.

Communal living also meant that the 10 students have to quickly learn about the value of cooperation and mutual respect in order to cultivate a spirit of harmony in a shared environment – furthering their development in training to be future church workers and leaders who would thrive as they serve in God's varied mission fields.

This story is reproduced and adapted from the Training in Mission (TIM) newsletter, Mission Chronicles, a bi-weekly publication produced by CWM TIM 2024 participants.



Short-term mission partner service

normally ranges from **six to twelve months**. The aims of sharing short-term mission partners through CWM include:

- **To facilitate mutual sharing and learning** between churches and partner organisations in partnership. Short-term mission partners share their lives, skills, and experiences. They are a visible presence of our partnership, the human face of mission, and a living link between CWM member churches and partner organisations. This mutual sharing and learning should strengthen the relationships between the involved churches and partner organisations.
- **To provide professional services** in specific projects or situations where it might otherwise be difficult to get the tasks done. In addition to sharing professional skills, short-term mission partners can offer a new perspective, which may enable those they serve to see their mission or task in new ways.
- **To offer a learning experience for the mission partner** who is called to be sensitive to local culture and context where they are sent. The mission partners should seek to discern God at work in a different context and thus grow in their own experience. Short-term mission partners can return to enrich their own churches and communities by sharing the new insights gained.

How To Apply

Please write to Coordinator for Partners In Mission at partnerinmission@cwmission.org

APPLY NOW

Explore short-term mission opportunities

Short-term mission partner service can be for people of any age and stage in life who are committed to sharing themselves, not just their skills, with others. Potential short-term mission partners are those with well-developed skills in professional services which include:

Accounting
Consultancy
Creative services
Education
Healthcare
Media & Infotech
Project Management



For more information
www.cwmission.org



Internship

An experience enlargement for young people
Programme

Who can apply?



Young people aged 21-30 years old who is able to commit to working full-time for 6-12 months.



CWM is an ecumenical and mission organisation, and so we require interns to be from a CWM member church or partner organisation.

Your workplan will include opportunities to

- engage with CWM member churches and ecumenical organisations in programmatic work
- assist in programme planning and implementation
- explore finance and administration and develop new skills in a supportive environment

Send Your Application



julie.sim@cwmission.org

For more information
www.cwmission.org





At A Glance

Member Church News



The Church of Bangladesh's Mission to Khagrachari



From 18-19 May, the Bishop of the Church of Bangladesh, Most Rev. Samuel Mankhin, along with Rev. Ajoy Ritchil, an ordained minister of the church, embarked on a visit to the Khagrachari district in Southern Bangladesh where several mission centres are located.

Ritchil is also one of two Church of Bangladesh ministers appointed to provide pastoral care in the district.

The journey involved trekking through several hills and traversing challenging terrains such as muddy tracks while braving heavy rains and thunderstorms, bringing home fully the harsh realities faced by missionaries while they attempted to reach people in remote areas with the good news of Jesus Christ.

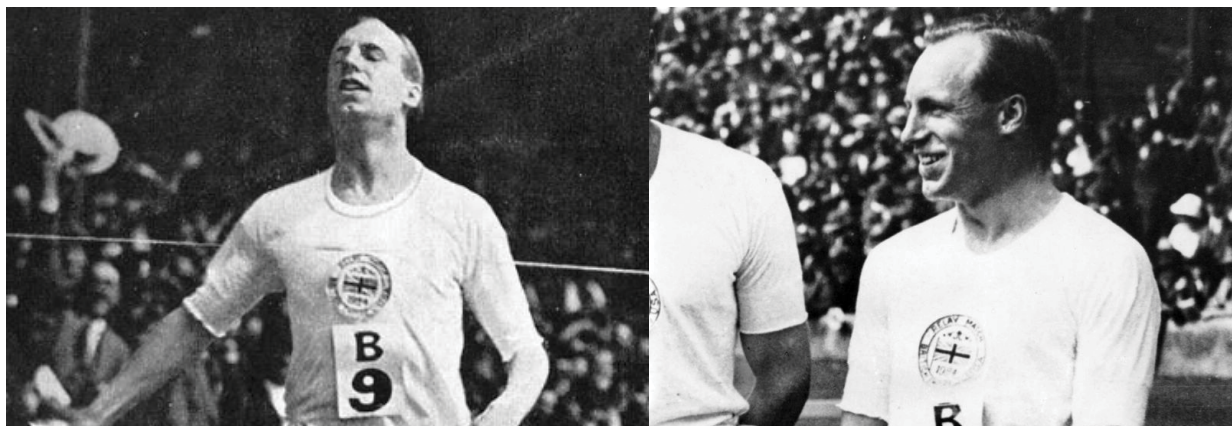
The mission visit saw the duo reaching mission centres in Notun Bagan Para, Dukhiram Para, and Alobortika Para in the Bhaibon Chora Union Parishad, as well as Lomba Chora and Bhalukkhe Chora in another Upazila of Khagrachori. There, they spent Pentecost Sunday with the villagers, drawing them closer in Christian fellowship.

Despite having to go through the geographical hazards and risks, Mankhin remained mindful that his tough experiences and hardships accrued in his journey to the remote mission centres were nothing compared to those that the Apostle Paul had to go through.

As he reflected on the words in 2 Corinthians 4:8-9 where Paul wrote, "We are hard-pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed," Mankhin said, "These words resonate deeply as we continue our mission work, facing various challenges but remaining steadfast in our faith and purpose. Our journey, though filled with obstacles, is a testament to our unwavering commitment to spreading the Gospel and serving our communities."

"As we continue on this journey, our focus and priorities remain steadfast in mission evangelism, spreading the love and message of Christ to all corners of Bangladesh."

100 years on, we celebrate Eric Liddell—the missionary who flew as he ran



Nicknamed “The Flying Scotsman,” Eric Liddell’s achievements in the 1924 Olympic Games in Paris—one of which was his famous gold medal finish in the 400m race—have been immortalised in the 1981 film *Chariots of Fire*.

What made the win remarkable was that Liddell never intended to run in that race but decided to take part in it after discovering that the heats for the 100m race (his favoured event) were scheduled on a Sunday.

A devout Christian, Liddell declined to run on the Lord’s Day and instead trained fervently for the 200m and 400m races—clinching bronze in the former and his legendary gold win in the latter.

One hundred years since his win on the track, Liddell, an accomplished athlete and missionary, was lauded during a service at St Giles’ Cathedral in Edinburgh, Scotland on 22 June.

The sermon at the service was delivered by Rev. Lindsey Sanderson, Moderator of the United Reformed Church National Synod of Scotland.

In an engaging sermon, she celebrated Liddell’s roots as a Scottish Congregationalist.

Sanderson preached from Micah 6:6-8 and Matthew 5:1-12, weaving together God’s call to service with Liddell’s own sense of calling.

She also shared stories of how the teenagers at Morningside Congregational Church—where Liddell led Bible study sessions—formed a fan club, and how she had related to Liddell’s dedication to his faith after

watching *Chariots of Fire* as a child.

Born in North China in 1902, Liddell retained strong family links to Edinburgh, and spent time with his family at Morningside whenever they visited the UK.

Following his Olympic triumph, Liddell trained at the Scottish Congregational College during 1924 and 1925 before returning to China as a missionary serving with the London Missionary Society, predecessor to the Council for World Mission.

Seven years later, Liddell was ordained by the Congregational Union of Scotland in 1932 and he continued his missionary work in China until where he was imprisoned in a Japanese internment camp in 1943 during WWII.

Liddell, unfortunately, passed in 1945, just five months before the camp was liberated.

Today, the Morningside United Church is still heavily involved in supporting The Eric Liddell Community as part of the congregation’s ministry on “Holy Corner” in Edinburgh.

A series of events and activities were also planned for the Liddell centenary celebrations from July through August including stage plays, a BBC radio broadcast, and the opening of Eric Liddell Peace Garden which will be located behind the Morningside United Church’s building.

This story has been abridged and reproduced from <https://urc.org.uk/eric-liddell-olympic-gold-centenary-celebrated-at-st-giles-cathedral/>. For more information about this summer’s Eric Liddell events, visit www.morningsideunitedchurch.org or www.ericliddell.org.

UCCSA-IMB Conference looks deeply at lives and ministries in Southern Africa



The South Africa Synod and the Central Regional Council of the United Congregational Church of Southern Africa-International Missions Board (UCCSA-IMB) jointly hosted their 16th Biennial Conference from 4-7 July at the Tshwane University of Technology in Pretoria.

The conference, under the theme “Triune God—Our All in All,” referenced Psalm 139 and Ephesians 4:2-6. The four-day event saw delegates gathering to celebrate the fullness of the Triune God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—and how the divine community of the Trinity sets the foundation and sustains lives and ministries in Southern Africa.

Key components of the conference were sharing best practices, discussing potential collaborative efforts in missiological initiatives, and strategising for the next biennium.

“Triune God—Our All in All”

A panel discussion on the theme “Triune God: Our All in All” was organised on 6 July.

Facilitated by Rev. Mthobisi Sibanda, the panel of speakers explored the significance of the Triune God in the life of the church, and declared that the Triune God—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit—is the source, sustainer, and fulfilment of the church’s existence.

Rev. Dr Xolani Maseko, Mission and Ministry Secretary of UCCSA, highlighted the saving work of the Triune God in Jesus Christ, which extends not just to all humankind but also to all of creation: “We are challenged to be faithful stewards of God’s handiwork, recognizing the Triune God as the Creator, the Redeemer, and the Sustainer,” he reflected.

The panel also delved into sub-themes that provided insightful glimpses into the significance of the Triune God, addressing the dignity of all humanity, and emphasising the divine call to see the image of God in our neighbours.

Collectively, the panel called to reflect on one’s relationship with the Triune God and with one another, as well as the deepening of each participant’s relationship with the UCCSA as their mother church—all of which will serve to remind congregants that the Triune God is indeed their “All in All.”

To lead is to transform

UCCSA General Secretary Rev. Kudzani Ndebele delivered a message from Esther 4:1-17 and Acts 7:1-7 on transformative leadership. The sermon segued into the induction of new UCCSA officers.

Incoming UCCSA-IMB Chairperson, Gilda Listure, formally closed the conference, sending delegates forth with spirits renewed and hearts transformed by the movement of the Triune God.



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

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

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Registered in Singapore
Unique Entity Number 201206146Z

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