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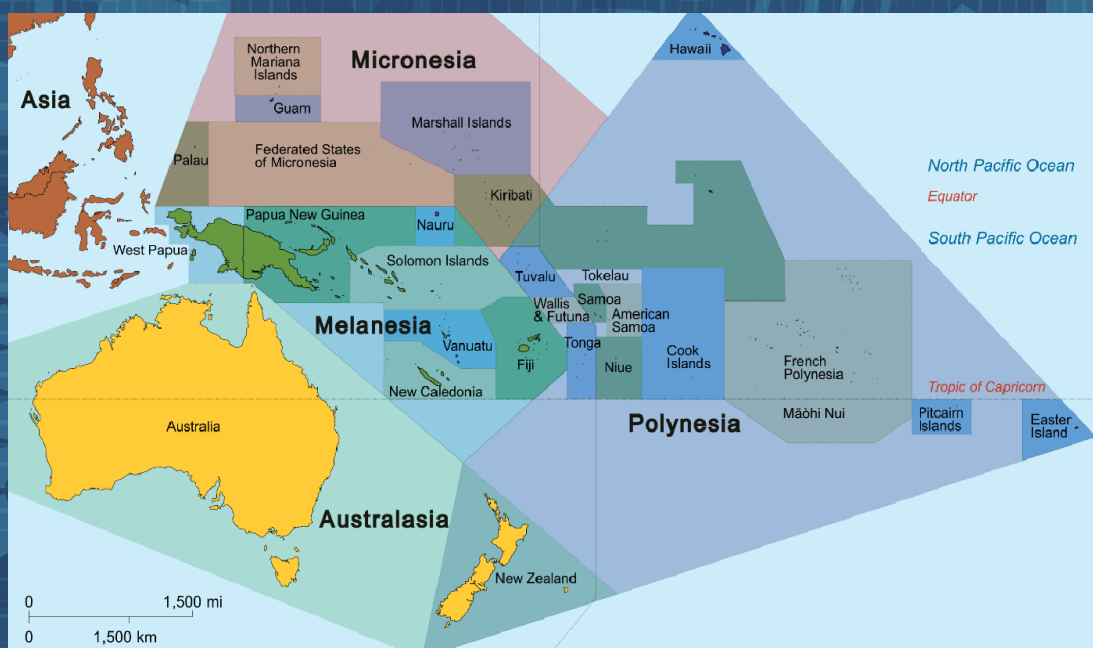




FORE- WORD

INSIGHT

Pacific Region:
*Rising Tides of
Transformation*



The Pasifikas: Standing in Unity Amidst Challenging Situations

Imagine taking an overnight boat to get to the first of four or five flights to arrive at a global CWM event. Lack of through connections may mean the need for a variety of visas and rechecking of bags along the way. Such journeys invariably require changes of seasons (and associated clothes). Imagine that after three days and nights of travel, you touch down to take your first ever train ride. This is common for Pasifikas!

As the largest geographic region in the world, yet with the smallest continental landmass, Pacific-Oceania has ten member churches, who are currently welcoming renewed relationships with two more.

At the January Members' Mission Forum, our Pasifika CWM family will include: Congregational-background (Congregational Christian Church Samoa and Congregational Christian Church in American Samoa,

Nauru Congregational Church, Congregational Union of New Zealand, Ekalesia Kelisiano Tuvalu, Etaretia Porotetani Maohi, with Cook Islands Christian Church being welcomed), Presbyterian-background (Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand, with Presbyterian Church of Vanuatu being welcomed) and Union Churches of merged Reformed/ Congregational/Presbyterian and Methodist backgrounds (Kiribati Uniting Church, United Church in Papua New Guinea and United Church in the Solomon Islands).

The member churches' congregations are situated in all four areas of Oceania (Polynesia, Melanesia, Micronesia and Australasia). Some of these congregations are indigenous to their place, and there are increasing numbers of congregations of diaspora Pasifikas.

Some of the migrations are driven by economic or political factors, while others are connected to

The Pasifikas: *Standing in Unity Amidst Challenging Situations*

climate migration. All our member churches name climate concerns as a key priority, with rising sea levels and increasing water temperatures threatening food security and the very existence of many communities. Already, several countries have become totally dependent on imports for survival.

Our stewardship responsibilities therefore include water as much as land, with one of the grave threats being deep-sea mining.

Out of the depths, we cry to God!

The Cultural Night is always a highlight when Pasifikas gather. The night is not just a celebration of diversity but also an act of prophetic mission, serving to preserve threatened culture and language in the face of colonial and global economic pressures. Dancing with joy and singing in language become acts of defiance against those who would threaten life itself. It is a form of proclaiming life-flourishing good news, faith, hope and love.

CWM has based several Training-in-Mission (TIM) programmes, consultations, and training events in the Pacific over recent years.

In 2025, immediately after the Members' Mission Forum in Samoa from 19-22 January, there will be a Women's Gathering (23-24 January).

These will be followed by the Face2Face Global Programme on Mining at Nauru during late June to early July, while the Pacific Youth Initiative, focusing on nuclear threats and challenges, will take place in late October hosted by Etaretia Porotetani Maohi (French Polynesia).

There is a handful of scholars, sponsored by CWM, and various trainings across the region, provided with the support of our Member Church Initiative grants. Some of these include poly-lingual language development among youth; support for safeguarding of vulnerable people; combatting gender-based violence; health education; and development of project management skills and administrative competency.

In this edition of INSIGHT, you will see how a Partner-in-Mission is sent and received between Pasifika churches. One of our theological colleges offers reflections on mission in the region. As mission-led education has been such a strong part of Pacific development, we encounter those who pursue

theological education and find its value in being used in the wider community, with one of our CWM profiles being a minister-scholar who finds himself leading his country as a Parliamentarian and the world as a presenter at COP.

We also see women participants in global CWM events return home and integrate their learnings locally, challenging very different communities and forming fresh and inspiring networks of leaders.

Pacific Programme Associate, Fuata Varea-Singh, and I talk about empowering girls and women to participate in education by tackling women's health education and nurturing sustainable practices for women's hygiene support.

January in the South Pacific is the season of the summer holidays. We invite you to thaw out in this edition of INSIGHT and let us provide you with glimpses of Paradise!



*Rev. Dr Amelia Koh-Butler
Mission Secretary
Education & Empowerment,
Pacific Region*

VIEW- POINTS

INSIGHT

Pacific Region:
*Rising Tides of
Transformation*



Witnessing God at Work Through A New Face

As if the adventure of meeting 11 other women from around the world, visiting places of historical interest and importance in both London and Wales, and experiencing wonderful hospitality was *not* enough, my learning and opportunities for growth in things spiritual, and expansion of wider awareness of many of God's activities seen in Blaenau Ffestiniog and Pontypridd, was both a privilege and a challenge to my understanding of how He is at work in so many ways.

The New Face (Faith and Cultural Exchange) Programme that took place in September 2024 was a marvellous introduction to the work of the Council for World Mission (CWM) for me!

Through the programme, I now have contacts in Zimbabwe, Zambia, Madagascar, Kiribati, Singapore, and the West Indies. I also have glimpsed a snippet of how the lives of fellow women clergy are impacted day to day as they seek to serve and follow Christ in their own context. Many thanks too, to my prayerfully discerning colleague for inviting me to join her on the journey from New Zealand.



*Rev. Lynne Hall
Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa
New Zealand (PCANZ)*





A New Face Opened My Eyes to Cultures and Ministries, and Forged New Friendships

I had the great fortune to be accepted into the 2023/2024 A New Face (ANF) programme that took me to Taiwan in 2023. There, I gathered with seven other women ministers who came from the various Council for World Mission (CWM) regions.

Aside from the privilege of meeting and hearing the stories of many Indigenous ministries, Taiwan's strategic intentionality in raising up women leaders in the church was the main takeaway that left an indelible impression.

Come 2024, we were gathered once again in the United Kingdom (UK), where we spent our time in England and Wales. For the second half of the ANF programme, each participant was given the opportunity to invite a female colleague to join us. A key part of this programme in the UK was the focus on the motivations and resources that prompted Christianity to spread to the countries we came from and how the church is a tool in saving the native language in Wales.

Looking back, it was a gift both to spend this fruitful period amidst vastly different contexts and personalities and to hear of their ministry stories while learning how being one in Christ intersects with the diversity of culture.

The trip to the UK in 2024 also gave me the cause to recognise the distinct culture at play in Aotearoa that is not often thought about. My denomination, being predominantly white and middle class, has a culture within it that we have not explored, and yet it is at play when we welcome the many local and surrounding cultures into our own faith communities.

To cap the experience off, I was also heartened to see the vast possibilities that international missions through new friendships forged during my time in ANF can bring.



*Rev. Erin Pendreigh
Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa
New Zealand (PCANZ)*



Stronger Together in Christ

Together with Rev. Taratai, my experience at the A New Face programme when it was held in the United Kingdom and Wales gave me room to pause and reflect on some of the pressing issues concerning my community in the Kiribati Uniting Church (KUC).

In the 1950s, women had no rights when it came to community leadership or other occasions. This thankfully changed as our people grew up with a uniting faith in the God of Love. My people have come to equate respecting ordained females to the respect accorded to the eldest people in our culture. It is heartening to see women becoming more valued in leadership positions for their acumen in decision-making.

Throughout the time that I shared with the other participants, we also traded stories on our specific regional challenges. For the Pacific, one of the major issues facing our island communities is the impacts of climate change. My country, Kiribati, lies at just about three metres above sea level.





Our people who live in coastal areas are always at the receiving end of the dangers around the rising sea levels and the associated effects of coastline destruction. As a result, they constructed seawalls and moved further inland. The coastal communities also worked harder to minimize the impact through the planting of mangroves. Meanwhile, Kiribati has also received aid in the forms of water desalination machines to treat increasingly salinised water.

Kiribati also suffers from serious unemployment percentages. About 50% of my church's population live unemployed. This creates a growing issue for the church to stay afloat financially.

Despite all these challenges, my time at A New Face has imbued in me a sense of hope and community as I came to learn that we are stronger united as a body of Christ. I continue to stay in prayer for my community to show our solidarity in working hard as one to overcome the obstacles we encounter in life because we can do all things in God who strengthens us (Philippians 4:13).

May God continue to bless our nation, our church, and our partners.



*Rev. Rikee Naumwata
Kiribati Uniting Church (KUC)*



ANF Brought Me Closer With Fellow Members of the Body of Christ

CWM's A New Face (ANF) programme provided me with an opportunity to connect with other clergy from around the world and share about our common faith in Jesus Christ. We also talked about some local issues and challenges that we face in our country like domestic violence, climate change, and poverty.

The programme, that was held in the United Kingdom and Wales, was an eyeopening experience for me and my partner Rev. Rikee Naumwata as we could observe the various faith experiences through the different church services as they quite differ from the ones in Kiribati Uniting Church where we serve.

As the participants developed a sense of camaraderie over the many days together, we learnt how to connect with each other despite our differences in perspectives,



languages, and races. As a result, we became a closely knitted support group that often encouraged each other throughout our time together.

ANF has also taught me the values of good hospitality, and the importance of establishing a strong, and deep connection with different people and how I can be a servant leader to others whilst displaying Christ's love of the community around me.

I would definitely encourage more of my brethren from not just my country but also the surrounding Pacific Islands to participate in this programme in order to learn about how we can grow together as a church, as we collectively seek to face and tackle the spectrum of societal and environmental issues inherent in our region.



*Rev. Tatairenga Taratai
Kiribati Uniting Church (KUC)*





My Journey as a Partner-in-Mission in Kiribati, the Pacific Island Nation

The Partner-in-Mission (PIM) programme offers a unique opportunity to engage in missional work, exposing us to cultural diversity, religious experiences, and socioeconomic backgrounds across our Member Churches. It not only enriches us but also allows us to enrich the lives of the people and countries we serve through contextual, cultural, spiritual, and social encounters.

In early April 2024, I had the opportunity to be a part of PIM, serving the Kiribati Uniting Church (KUC).

After careful consideration of the opportunities and challenges, I decided to take up this role to offer my experiences and skills in supporting and building KUC's administrative capacity. Equally significant was the chance to learn and experience a new culture, gain new knowledge, and be part of CWM's ecumenical churches and their life-flourishing mission.

Taking on the role of PIM in a different country, culture, and environment presents many challenges and requires an understanding of CWM's purposes and mission goals. Thankfully, the CWM training manual positioned me well for this role.

My initial thoughts about the PIM role at Tangintebu College (TThC) were filled with excitement as I anticipated experiencing a new role, culture, and the people of Kiribati firsthand.

Much has been said about this country, its people, and their culture. Kiribati is one of the Pacific island nations with limited land, vulnerable to climate change impacts, overpopulation, and limited employment opportunities compared to the Solomon Islands.

These challenges present significant obstacles for government and churches. Despite these challenges, the people of Kiribati are resilient and adapt to whatever circumstances come their way.

As a Project and Policy Manager, one of my greatest challenges has been effective communication and interaction with those I serve. Kiribati uses a form of ocean language often spoken and used in all aspects of work and daily life. English is rarely used and only on certain occasions. This sometimes placed me in awkward situations, making progress in my work feels stagnant at times.

However, the positive work environment, friendly atmosphere, and collaboration received despite differences in our culture, language, and work experiences have always proved to be beacons of hope throughout my first year as a PIM.

Moreover, the PIM role has positively contributed to the development goals of the KUC/TThC organisation, leading to a sense of appreciation and acknowledgment of CWM's support.

As a new person in a foreign context and organisation, working as a PIM has profoundly enriched my life by deepening my understanding of compassion and service for an organisation striving to achieve its goals. It has taught me the true meaning of self-sacrifice and strengthened my faith in God. It has allowed me to build meaningful relationships with people from diverse backgrounds.

These connections have not only enriched my life but also shown me the will of some KUC communities and their collective faith in helping the college to thrive.

Every effort contributes to the greater good. In Kiribati, where the island nation is vulnerable to climate change, the population is growing, and resources are scarce, I have learned the importance of resilience and adaptability. I have come to realize that even a small contribution has a significant impact.

My first year has shown me that every effort, no matter how small, contributes to the greater good and reflects God's love. My faith has been greatly enriched through witnessing the resilience and faith of those we serve.

Historically, Kiribati, formerly known as the Gilbert Islands, has been inhabited for at least 700 years, possibly much longer.

The islands were initially settled by Austronesian peoples, followed by invasions from Polynesian and

Melanesian cultures. The islands became a British protectorate in 1892 and later part of the Gilbert and Ellice Islands Colony. Kiribati became independent in 1979.

The official language of Kiribati is English, introduced by British colonisers. However, the native language, Kiribati (or Gilbertese), is widely spoken by about 90% of the population daily and in the workplace. It belongs to the Micronesian branch of the Austronesian language family.

Unlike the Solomon Islands, which is predominantly Melanesian, Kiribati culture is a blend of Micronesian, Polynesian, and Melanesian influences. Traditional customs, music, dance, and crafts play a significant role in the people's daily life.

The I-Kiribati people have a strong sense of community and place great importance on family and social ties. I have learnt and am continually impressed by the fact that despite modern influences, the Kiribati language and cultural practices have remained relatively intact.



Mr Jacob Zikuli
CWM Partner-In-Mission



From Church to Government: Towards Climate Diplomacy

My journey from research work in theology to political office was anything but linear.

It cannot be in Tuvalu for two reasons.

The most obvious are the threats posed to our existence and the survival of our Indigenous ways of life. They constitute an intergenerational concern that binds ancestors, the living and those yet to be born.

The second reason has to do with the recognition that the people of Tuvalu are overwhelmingly Christian. The close link between culture and faith can be seen in the words of the Tuvaluan national anthem: “Tuvalu mo e Atua” (Tuvalu for the Almighty).

With the revision of the national Constitution in 2023, it has brought together local cultural values, the Christian faith, and the realities of climate change in a way that is not found in any other constitution. It assumes the providence and blessings of God while outlining the

claim to permanent maritime zones and statehood in the face of rising sea levels.

I first became concerned about climate change long before I studied theology. As a little boy growing up in Vaitupu, Tuvalu, I witnessed the drastic changes in the rising of the sea and the flooding of most low-lying places. I was aware of how the heat kept increasing and could see how our way of life on the island was being disrupted.

I have now experienced two seasons of researching theology and climate change – in between which I have been a lending my voice as a climate activist. I have served as the Climate Change Project Manager at Ekalesia Kelisiano Tuvalu (EKT) for over seven years and also worked at the Tuvalu Association of Non-Governmental Organisations (TANGO) and attended every UN Conference of the Parties (COP) from Doha 2011, and Paris 2015 onwards. I was also co-chair of the UN-based International Indigenous Peoples Forum on Climate Change.

My first foray into theological research was a master's thesis done in Taiwan with M.P. Joseph. In this paper, I wrote on the treatise between Indigenous knowledge and customs and theology.

This work was based on the cultural significance of the "fatele" (dance and song) through which the Tuvaluan community expresses its hopes and fears.

In contrast, my doctoral research done through Charles Sturt University with Clive Pearson was different. In terms of methodology, I utilised "fatele" and the Indigenous practice of "muna o te fale" (the wisdom of the house which is passed down from one generation to another). The Pasifika practice of "Talanoa" (storytelling) did not seem appropriate in our situation of great urgency: it can easily degenerate into gossip. It is also the case that I have no desire to homogenise the Pasifika region: we are not all the same in our levels of vulnerability.

For the first time I drew upon the parable of the (good) Samaritan which was interpreted through Tuvalu custom and idiom. It was the first time this parable had been put to use in the region for the sake of climate change.

The default practice of Tuvalu has been to use the stories of Noah and Job. This thesis provided a reading of the "daunting situation" (se tokagamalie) facing Tuvalu and was interdisciplinary. It made use of climate science and Earth system science.

The selection of the parable was deliberate and helps bridge the world of faith and politics. The concept of the neighbour is found in Indigenous culture, in secular societies, in the Christian faith, and in other faiths, like Islam.

On the geopolitical stage Tuvalu is what is called a "weak actor"—we are small and lack the resources of the most powerful nations. We are often not noticed even in Pasifika anthologies on climate change (Kiribati is more often cited).

Rather than continue to cite Job and Noah, the parable of the Good Samaritan enables us to pose both an ethical and religious question to the world that is easily recognizable: "am I not your tuakoi (neighbour)?"

In my new capacity as Minister of Climate Change, I was asked to provide the opening address to the recent meeting of the Pacific Conference of Churches on this Otin-Tai Declaration which is now the "Tuakoi Lei." The

Tuakoi Lei Declaration now identifies a number of ways in which we might think about who is the [good] neighbour.

The theological research I have done now helps me in my new role. It forms the basis of my meetings with foreign ambassadors, attending the small island states meetings, and representing Tuvalu at COP conferences like Baku.

I may not make an explicit reference to the parable; I may not dance a fatele; I may not repeat some advice from muna o tef ale. But all these things are there embodied within me as I seek to fulfil my vocation on behalf of a deeply Christian, deeply vulnerable nation.

It motivates me whenever I seek to speak on the phasing out of fossil fuels and on mechanisms of loss and damage. In some ways, I am still on a journey to realise more fully how the parable and its emphasis on being a "good" neighbour can play itself out on the geopolitical stage.



*Dr Maina Vakafua Talia
Minister of Home Affairs, Climate
Change and Environment
Government of Tuvalu*



A Quest for Sovereignty, Identity, and Freedom

If the cry for self-determination, independence, and freedom is becoming a burning issue for all nations that have been colonised by powers such as Great Britain, United States of America, France, Germany, Spain, etc., then it is because KAIROS or God's time has started to move among the nations to free them from colonialism and slavery.

For us in the Pacific, apart the Kingdom of Tonga, the only island that was not colonised, colonisation started in 1700. It started first when the ships of explorers arrived to collect data and resources that were beneficial for the countries from whence they were sent.

As for Māōhi Nui* (known under the nickname, French Polynesia, Tahiti), the first colonisers were from Great Britain, under the label of the London Missionary Society (LMS), which landed on our shores on 5 March 1797.

It was their mission to spread the Gospel all over the Pacific. But while doing their missionary works, they were

also initiating our people in a new way of life, which is theirs, in terms of clothing, housing, education, culture, and social behaviours.

But the peak of colonialism in our history really started in 1839 when the French navy invaded our main island of Tahiti through the naval commander, Abel Aubert du Petit-Thouars.

In just three years they took control over the kingship of the Queen Pomare IV and imposed French control over Tahiti, making it a French protectorate in 1842. They also expelled all the British missionaries from Tahiti and wrested control of the governance of the church that was established by the LMS.

By 29 June 1880, the French declared the annexation of the whole of Māōhi Nui territory. The resistance and resiliency posed by our ancestors armed with only spears and bows were tragically no match against guns and cannons. As a result, many of our ancestors



died in fighting for their freedom. From my personal point of view, that was an act of barbarism. I will qualify such act an occupation, and till this day, we are an occupied territory.

Since then, France has implanted all the structures and laws that did not comply to our context and way of life as Māōhi. We are forced to adopt their way of life. It was an assimilation process and governance they foisted upon our territory through education where the main language taught in school was and is still French. The land and territorial issues are but one of many major problems that has divided families, with many being dispossessed of their right to land.

Therefore, if the quest for sovereignty, identity, and freedom is one of the Etārētia Porotetani Māōhi's (EPM) mission, then it is only because freedom is a faith issue and not one of a political origin.

The liberation of Israel from the slavery of Egypt is God's initiative and plan. And as a vigilant sentinel, EPM's stand for the right of the Māōhi people to self-determination and freedom, is in line with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations on 10 December 1948, which provides in article 18 that reads: "Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and of religion." These rights recognised by this United Nations Declaration pertained to the rights, both tangible and intangible, of Indigenous peoples to their heritage and to self-determination.

There are three main demands made by the EPM in our revendication submitted at the United Nations 4th Commission on decolonisation and the United Nations C24 for self-determination:

- Recognition by the French state of our sovereignty and Māōhi identity.
- To be returned our ancestors' heritage of five million square kilometres of our maritime resources.
- The right to safeguard our cultural heritage.

But we know it is not easy and will still take long to see the achievement of our mission.

Nevertheless we still hold on to the truth that with God we can; with faith we can.



Rev. Francois Pihate
President
Etaretia Porotetani Maohi (EPM)

* Māōhi Nui is the māōhi Indigenous name for French Polynesia.



The Pacific Works on Gender Justice

At the end of the 15th Triennial Conference of Pacific Women and the 8th Pacific Ministers of Women meeting in August 2024, representatives of governments, civil society, and nongovernmental organisations reiterated calls to make the Pacific free from violence, and safer for women and girls.

The meeting focused on three themes – women and girls' health, gender-based violence, and gender responsive climate justice. It emphasised the importance of understanding and addressing the root causes of gender-based violence, which include deeply ingrained gender inequality, harmful social norms, and economic disparities. In the Pacific, two out of three women will experience violence – physical and sexual assault, emotional abuse, and harmful traditional practices – in their lifetimes which is above the global average. Yet, women in the Pacific value family relationships and seek to foster healthy communities. Stories highlighted the emergence of new forms of violence, such as technology-facilitated abuse, where perpetrators use digital platforms to harass, intimidate, and control women and girls.

The CWM Member's Mission Forum Women's Gathering in January 2024 shared stories and discuss the role of the churches in addressing some of these challenges. The keynote speaker for the Women's programme will be Dr Mercy Ah Siu-Maliko. Mercy is a Samoan theologian, who has experience both at Pulia College in Samoa and Otago University in New Zealand. She is lead researcher for a project with the New Zealand Institute for Pacific Research. The research project is "Fola le ta'ui a le Atua: Rolling Out the Mat of Scripture: Church Responses to Gender-Based Violence Against Women in Samoa: Supporting Church Capacity for Transformative Social Leadership."

EXAMPLE 1 – Even pastors' families experience violent outbursts...

A couple lived in a troubled marriage where the husband, a carpenter working at a local

church, often resorted to violence against his wife. One day, the wife left him, seeking refuge elsewhere. Upon hearing of the separation, the pastor of the church took the husband's side. The pastor justified the husband's behaviour by claiming that the wife would question him whenever he came home late, which upset him and led to his violent outbursts.

When asked for his opinion on the situation, the pastor responded that the wife should be more submissive to her husband and refrain from questioning him. He suggested that she should show more love and understanding when he returned home, regardless of his actions or behaviour. The pastor's words, instead of offering support to the wife, placed the blame on her, reinforcing a belief that she should accept the husband's mistreatment as part of her marital duty.

In some cultures, respect for women has been eroded by an emphasis on dominance and "power-over" within marital relationships. Rather than seeing the husband-wife bond as a team, wives may be treated like slaves. In such cases, violence can go unchecked. In the example above, we can see that the woman is blamed for the husband's misuse of power. The pastor's response acts as a form of collusion, not helping the husband to find other ways of relating or learning self-control. In such instances, the church is seen to support violence against women and reinforce the vulnerability of women.

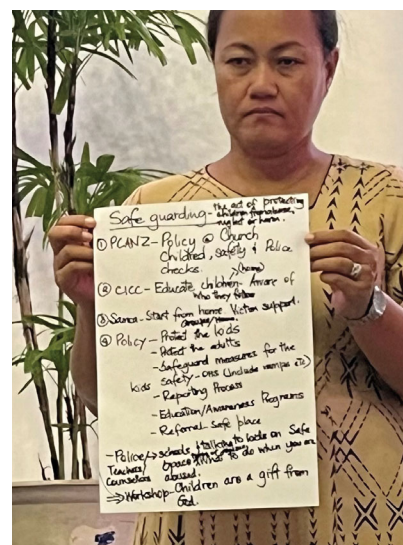
There are countless examples from different countries across the Pacific. Workshops involving some of our Member Churches, secular organisations, and the Pacific Council of Churches are helping to expose the prevalence of the issue.

EXAMPLE 2 – Church responses sometimes side with the dominant rather than the margin...

A woman endured constant verbal abuse from her husband, who blamed her for everything she had gone through, insisting that she deserved the pain. Early in their relationship, she had confided in him about the trauma she experienced at 18, when she was raped by a close family member. She explained how the rape happened in the middle of the night, leaving her with deep scars, especially when someone would wake her up suddenly.

After they married, every argument would end with the husband telling her that it was her fault that she got raped, further deepening her pain. She felt trapped in a marriage where her trauma was ignored, and instead of empathy, she was met with blame and criticism. Over time, she realized she no longer felt safe in the relationship and that the verbal abuse was reopening old wounds. Unable to endure the pain any longer, she left him.

The husband, hoping to save their marriage, sought counselling from their pastor. When they attended their first session, the pastor said to the wife, "Your husband tells me you're sometimes very cheeky. There are times when he feels unloved by you, and you refuse to show affection. I suggest you start submitting to him and do whatever he tells you." His words offered no support or understanding of the woman's trauma. Instead, they placed the blame on her, making it clear that her needs and pain were secondary to the husband's desires.



Pacific Region: *Rising Tides of Transformation*

Women often lag behind men, not just in accessing paid work, but also education. It is not just that women need to take time to deliver and bring up babies. It is also that their education is often disrupted as they row from being girls to young women. According to the United Nations, every month, more than two billion people around the world menstruate (period/menses). While this is a natural and healthy process, still millions of women and girls cannot afford menstrual products or access to safe water and sanitation to manage their own health and hygiene. This interrupts their lives, rights, and freedoms. Period poverty refers to the inability to afford and access self-care products, sanitation, and hygiene facilities and education and awareness to manage health and wellness. This disadvantages women and it doesn't have to be this way.

Misinformation and assumptions that women are less human (or less loved by God) have been part of the fabric of church culture. Prior to the colonial impact in the Pacific, a number of our island nations had more respected and honoured understandings of women in our communities. Pasifika philosophies and theologies (innovative courses/gatherings run by Pacific Theological College) are helping to bring some of these understandings back into our consciousness.

Although there are so many stories about women in the Bible, many of these are not known or preached about in mixed gender settings. It is as if we are only reading a redacted (edited) form of the scriptures. Missing so much of the biblical story has been dangerous. We need to reclaim the biblical stories and some of the interpretive myths need to be debunked.

Treating women as second-class spiritual beings has limited women in developing their own self-understandings as physical beings. Yet, the idea of Jesus' incarnation as fully human and fully divine - body and spirit - reminds us that we are both. Churches need to work with women about both spirituality and physicality and how they impact each other.

EXAMPLE 3 – Churches in the Pacific learn from churches in Africa

Days for Girls is an education and practical resource programme combatting period poverty and supporting women's health education. The women's meeting received, sample packs that can be given to girls who are coming of age and undertook the health training that can easily be disseminated through schools and churches. Two of the Member Churches already have a collaborative partnership with Days for Girls and were able to testify to the difference it makes to be able to offer practical support. Additionally, using sustainable (washable) hygiene products reduces waste and cost, making the programme particularly attractive in eco-conscious societies.

Some of our churches will be in a position to take on active projects. For some of our church leaders, this was an opportunity to get up-to-date educational materials for schools and youth



groups. To provide easy access to information, resources and samples of ways to support girls and women, we partnered with Days for Girls
<https://www.daysforgirls.org/>

The organisation originated in Kenya, but now is having a global impact. This offers us an example about how good mission projects can be shared across regions.

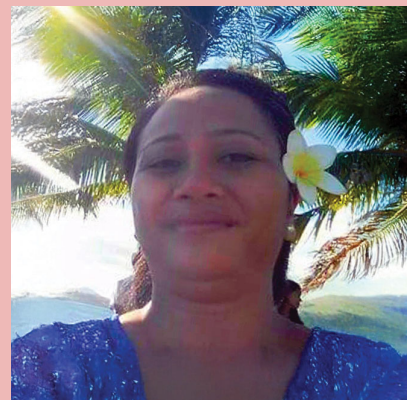
Others may use their social enterprise groups to make reusable hygiene kits, reducing waste and increasing availability. In leading an introductory workshop among our women, we have multiple mission goals:

- i. address disadvantage for girls and women in accessing education
- ii. empower our Member Church leaders to identify/develop their own different kinds of resources and responses, based on their contextual needs and capacities
- iii. identify potential practical local projects that could see immediate impact for girls and women across the region
- iv. develop networks and collaborative partnerships between women from Member Churches in the region

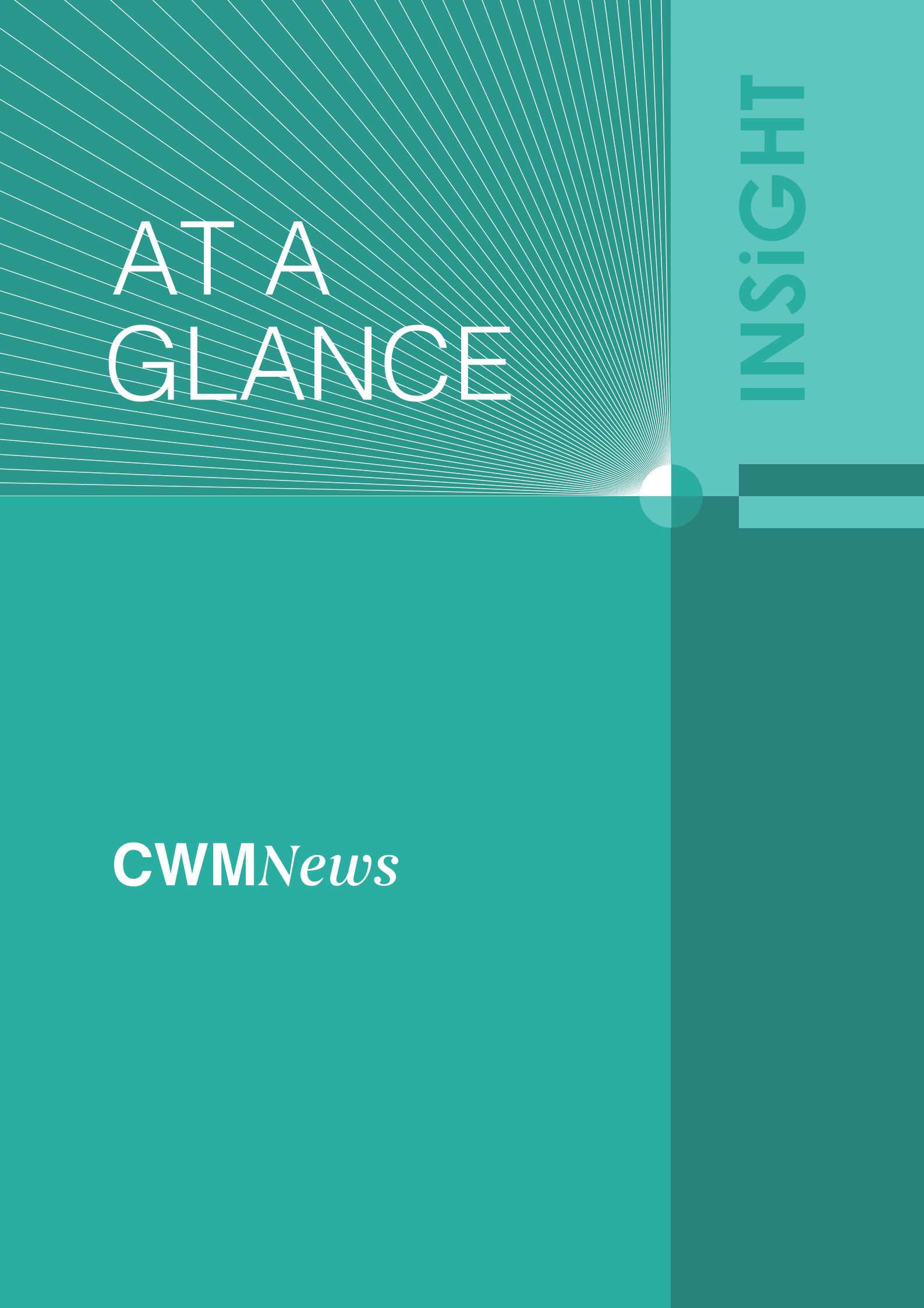
Our strategy is to bring different generations to pool wisdom and innovation. Just as a woman brought love into the world at Christmas and women proclaimed the resurrection on Easter Sunday, we have a part to play in the ongoing mission of God in the world.



*Rev. Dr Amelia Koh-Butler
Mission Secretary
Education and Empowerment
Pacific Region*



*Fuata Varea-Singh
Programme Associate
Pacific Region*



AT A
GLANCE

INSIGHT

CWM*News*



CWM Pacific Member's Mission Forum 2025: Tides in Transformation

As the first session in a series of six, the Council for World Mission (CWM) Pacific Member's Mission Forum (MMF) was held from 19 to 22 January in Apia, Samoa on the campus of the Malua Theological College.

Themed "Together in Transformation," the MMF fosters dialogue and strengthens collaboration and synergy among the region's member churches as the delegates explored and shared strategies and approaches to address the region's key social, economic, and cultural challenges.

The Pacific MMF delegates representing the region's ten member churches and two observing churches were warmly received on 18 January by the students of Malua College and representatives from the Congregational Christian Church of Samoa (CCCS), the hosting bodies of the event.

Decolonised education

In a keynote address, Rev. Dr Seforosa Carroll, from the United Theological College of Charles Sturt University in Australia, challenged the gathered delegates to "transform power" through decolonising education.

Carroll's presentation touched on the three main strands of Pasifika Indigenous traditions that illustrate the importance that the community has placed on the value of wisdom: storytelling (Hanuj) that fosters conversation, mat weaving (Sa'a) that brings communities together and breaks down walls, and "way-finding navigation" that displays the interconnectedness of the earth, sea, and sky.

By decolonising the dominant way of education that is steeped in the perspective of the colonising powers, a decolonised education will enable and empower students to embrace their theological voices and identities, and retake their agency for transformation.

This transformation, posited Carroll, was integral to the regions as a transformative theology and its subsequent form of theologising has the power to change what is unjust and systemic in societies since it embodies a different worldview than what has become dominant.

“They (the students) need to learn the skill of navigating and negotiating the vast ocean of (theological) knowledge,” said Carroll, drawing parallels to the history of the Pacific peoples that was synonymous with seafaring. Carroll also called for intersectionality to be used as a pedagogy method as it “offers a theological telescope to see not one world, but the constellation of worlds within human beings created by crisscrossing relationships.”

Standing together

Dr Sudipta Singh, CWM Deputy General Secretary-Programmes, shared with the delegates CWM’s contemporary approaches to transforming mission via The Onesimus Project (TOP). He also referenced the plethora of regional challenges that plague the Pacific such as the ongoing climate change impacts, economic injustice, the attempted repair of the oceans, child labour, sexual exploitation, and gender-based violence.

He exhorted the Pacific churches to work together in the face of the sheer intersectionality (connectedness) of these various issues.

“Mission in the Pacific must address the woven-ness of these issues and start to unpick the mat as an act of liberation,” he urged strongly.

Gender justice

Delving deeper into the call made by Singh was renowned Pacific academic, Dr Mercy Ah Siu-Maliko, a lecturer in theology at the Piula Theological College in Samoa. Ah Siu-Maliko gave a prayerful reflection on the damning issues of gender justice and gender-based violence – twin challenges that have plagued the Pacific society.

Making the audience shift in their seats with two heart-wrenching accounts of Pacific women who have had their lives thrown into disarray by prevailing gender-based injustices and inequalities, Ah Siu-Maliko highlighted the fact that patriarchal mindsets and social

relations in the private sphere are often not just contained there, but go on to permeate most economic, social, and political institutions.

Even though indignant feelings may arise from stories of the dehumanising of women in gender-biased, patriarchal societies, Ah Siu-Maliko called for a biblically grounded approach in addressing these societal injustices.

Quoting from Jeremiah 29:7 that contains God’s command to the Jewish people who were in exile in Babylon to seek the welfare of the city, Ah Siu-Maliko urged likewise for the faith community to engage the wider population in a theologically informed discourse about these issues, in forms of advocacy that can be evaluated and judged by society at large, and thus possibly prompt change.

“Go light your candle as our collective transformative response to gender injustice and gender-based violence as we go out to serve in wherever God has called us to serve in humility and love,” exhorted Ah Siu-Maliko.

CWM Statement on South Korea's Declaration of Martial Law



The Council for World Mission (CWM) expresses deepest concern and condemns the South Korean government's declaration of martial law on Tuesday, 3 December 2024. This action, ironically presented as a measure to protect constitutional democratic order, is a severe violation of the constitutional rights of the South Korean people and threatens the foundations of democracy achieved by people's blood and sweat.

The claim that martial law protects South Korea's constitutional order is deeply flawed. This declaration contradicts the principles of democracy, including the rule of law and individual freedom. By militarising governance and criminalising legitimate political actions, the government has abandoned its democratic accountability. Instead of safeguarding the Constitution, this measure violates it, creating a climate of fear and suppression.

As a global partnership of churches in mission, CWM is committed to advocating for the dignity and rights of all people, aiming to promote justice, liberation, and peace, especially in the face of oppression and injustice. We believe that the liberation of communities from authoritarianism and systemic injustices is central to the Gospel's call for abundant life for all.

The imposition of martial law in South Korea undermines these values. Therefore:

- We demand an immediate restoration of democracy and stability in South Korea. The government must cease all actions that infringe upon the rights of its citizens and restore democratic governance without delay.
- We call upon the people of South Korea to unite in peaceful resistance against this undemocratic imposition. Civil society must continue advocating for their freedoms with courage, determination, and resilience.
- We call upon churches and ecumenical organisations worldwide to pray for the people of South Korea, asking God for strength and courage during this unprecedented crisis. Churches must also advocate for peace and stability and support South Korean communities in resisting these undemocratic actions.

The imposition of martial law, although for a short while, in South Korea highlights the fragility of democracy in the face of authoritarianism. South Korea, a nation that has overcome numerous challenges to build a vibrant democracy, must not allow this regressive step to define its future.

CWM stands in solidarity with the people of South Korea as they strive for justice and freedom. We are committed to amplifying their voices, mobilising international support, and praying for their strength until democracy is fully restored and their rights are upheld.

May the God of justice, liberation, and peace guide the people of South Korea through this time of trial, strengthen them in the face of oppression, and inspire all who seek to stand with them.



Ecojustice School Brings Call for Better Collaboration, More Advocacy

The School of Intersection Ecotheology and Ecojustice Witness (SIEEW) programme concluded on 30 November in Johannesburg, South Africa with 20 graduates from four of the Council of World Mission's (CWM) six regions including Africa, Europe, South Asia and the Pacific.

Organised by CWM's Life-Flourishing Creation and Economy programme team, the three-week curriculum that started on 13 November reflects CWM's commitment to foster a closer integration between theology and the social arena of ecojustice.

The SIEEW programme was established to provide a vital platform to cultivate a sense of transformative theological reflection, while supporting praxis-oriented training in developing intersectional approaches to addressing ecological and social injustices.

The programme also seeks to empower CWM member churches to critically engage with climate change, environmental degradation, and structural inequalities from a theological and missiological perspective.

"SIEEW is a radical movement for transformation. It confronts the entrenched systems of exploitation and oppression that devastate the earth and its most vulnerable inhabitants. By joining this prophetic community, participants commit to becoming unapologetic advocates for justice, an unrelenting voice for the silenced, and a courageous witness for the liberation of all creation," described Rev. Daimon Mkandawire, CWM Mission Secretary for Ecology and Economy.

Five pillars of SIEEW

Five key touch-points form the bedrock of the programme that engages participants in theological reflections on ecojustice and the



role that faith communities play in advocating for ecological restoration.

The collective reflections were applied during a series of workshops designed to equip the participants with practical tools for ecojustice advocacy, including policy engagement, grassroots mobilization, and sustainable community practices.

To better involve younger participants, a Youth Panel was set up during the programme that created a space for sharing of innovative approaches to climate action and ecojustice from their local contexts.

A key focus of SIEEW was giving participants a realistic picture of various global ecological and economic challenges. This was accomplished by a series of curated site visits to major ecological restoration sites and diverse communities affected by environmental injustice, giving the visitors firsthand understanding of challenges and resilience.

Diverse cultural expressions of creation care were also celebrated, emphasising the interconnectedness and importance of faith traditions in the ministry of ecojustice advocacy.

"The climate crisis is not just an ecological issue but also one involving justice. This gathering has equipped us to call out oppressive systems and advocate for the

structural changes needed to restore creation," reflected Mposteng Thema, a participant from the Uniting Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa (UPCSA).

The role of faith communities also weighed on the mind of Manase Afutiti, a SIEEW participant from the Congregational Christian Church in Samoa (CCCS), who highlighted the importance of rising to the challenge of the climate crisis by moving from words to action.

"We have the power to inspire systemic change and to live out the hope and justice we proclaim," Afutiti said.

A commitment to collaborate

The 2024 SIEEW programme closed with an urgent call for transformative and systemic action and an urgent desire to empower participants not only with theological insights but also with practical strategies to challenge oppressive systems and foster ecojustice.

All 20 participants as well as ecumenical partners and leaders present also established an agreement to pursue collaborative ecojustice projects across the family of member churches, driving a deeper focus on advocacy, education, and resource mobilisation.



CWM Commemorates Two Decades of Accra Confession in Global Consultation

The Council for World Mission (CWM) joined an historical global gathering from 3-5 December in Hannover, Germany commemorating two decades of the Accra Confession, which is widely regarded as a gift from the Reformed communion to the larger ecumenical community.

The Accra Confession, particularly with its focus on economic equality and combatting oppression, has played a global role in uniting faith communities for justice.

Rev. Dr Setri Nyomi, World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC) General Secretary, in his welcome address, highlighted the purpose of the consultation: “This consultation celebrates the Accra Confession while addressing its gaps and challenges. The Accra Confession remains a vital part of the ecumenical

journey, with the WCRC walking alongside partners like the Council for World Mission and the World Council of Churches.”

Raising the stakes for justice

In a presentation on “Rise to Life: Mission in the Catastrophic Times,” Rev. Dr Jooseop Keum, General Secretary of CWM, noted that, even as we celebrate two decades of the Accra Confession, we are called to act now—in a day of climate crises, totalitarian terror, wars, and dysfunctional democracies.



“There are immediate and present dangers to many individuals and communities in our world,” he said. “The world is deeply wounded.”

Keum reflected that the Accra Confession has raised the stakes concerning attitudes toward issues of structural poverty in the world. “Following on from this, the CWM has joined the journey, keen to explore the missional implications of the Accra Confession, as it names the principalities and powers with which we must contend as we seek to proclaim the good news of God in our time,” he said. “At the end of the day, we all have to stand under the cross and have a crucified mind.”

Living into Accra today

After 20 years of the Accra Confession, Keum noted challenges in the world coupled with issues the confession could not address during its time.

“Accra did not address the whole issue of colonial exploitation and reparative justice,” he said. “The Accra Confession was a product of a long and patient process of hearings from the grassroots struggles to the global finance workers in the face of economic globalisation.”

Ending his presentation with a quote from Martin Luther King Jr that beseeches the faithful to hold on to their dreams, Keum said, “Let us not wallow in the valley of

despair, I say to you today, my friends. So even though we face the difficulties of today and tomorrow, [we] still have a dream.”

“As one family of God’s mission, let WCRC and CWM be transforming companions in our journey toward building life-flourishing communities.”

About the Accra Confession

The Accra Confession was adopted by the delegates of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches (WARC) 24th General Council in Accra, Ghana, in 2004. The confession was based on the theological conviction that the economic and environmental injustices of the global economy require the Reformed family to respond as a matter of faith in the gospel of Jesus Christ. In 2010, WARC merged with the Reformed Ecumenical Council, forming the World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC).



Training-In-Mission Graduates Gain Valuable Insights, Fresh Perspective in Philippines, Jamaica

Graduates of the 2024 Training-in-Mission (TIM) programme completed their course on 21 November, receiving not only a Diploma in Mission Studies but also certificates in Peer Mediation, Peace, Wellness and Resilience in Children.

This year's programme was held in collaboration with the United Theological Seminary (UTS) in the Philippines and the International University of the Caribbean (IUC) in

Jamaica, as well as the United Church of Jamaica and the Cayman Islands (UCJCI).

"My participation in the TIM program has granted me invaluable insights into mission work in the Philippines and Jamaica, inspiring fresh perspectives on how we can expand and improve our efforts," said Rebecca Wrights, a participant representing the Guyana Congregational Union.

Participants began the TIM programme in May with a series of online classes, then travelled to UTS before concluding at IUC.

Reframing mission

One of the key learnings at UTS involved the mental reframing and transformation of the missiological understanding that places marginalised communities at the centre. This was taught with the recognition that mission is to be done with people instead of for



people. Participants learnt about confronting the powers that maintain the marginalisation status quo.

Additionally, participants were guided in developing critical-thinking approaches when interpreting the Bible. They took deep dives into the textual contexts by applying objective criteria to the texts using inputs from opposing perspectives, benchmarked from local communities where the Bible was being read. For example, they considered questions such as: What would a fisherperson say about this fishing story?

Site visits reinforced the classroom lessons and allowed participants to use their practical skills, while having a closer look and experiencing the difficulties and challenges of specific marginalised groups and communities. Amongst these were the fishing communities in Manila Bay, Rosario, and Cavite, who have had their livelihoods threatened by the destruction of marine life through land reclamation works carried out by foreign companies.

Participants also interacted with families who were still grieving the loss of loved ones killed indiscriminately when then-President Rodrigo Duterte declared a war on drugs in 2016. The campaign saw widespread extra-judicial murders, imprisonment, and torture of individuals suspected to be involved with drugs. Many of these accusations were baseless and unproven, leaving families broken and struggling to survive as their

breadwinners were either taken away or killed.

Speaking truth to power

The second leg of the TIM programme involved nine weeks in the Caribbean region, where participants were warmly received by UCJCI and IUC.

In his address introducing the unique Caribbean context to the participants, Rev. Dr Roderick Hewitt, President of IUC, spoke of the importance of “truth telling to overcome threats to life,” where it concerned naming and exposing powers that are anti-life. He exhorted participants to seek to hear God at work in the diverse voices that are resisting the threats to life as they provide different perspectives and give clearer glimpses of how life can undermine the “Babylonian-Empire” system.

Participants visited various local museums, encountering the sordid histories of the transatlantic slave

trade. These identity-markers are part of the social fabric of the country. They include the stories of historical figures whose lifework was to oppose and rebel against the oppressive forces of empire, contributing to Jamaica's fight towards freedom and self-governance.

The TIM participants were exposed to topics such as the legacies of slavery, the religious landscape of Jamaica, and were also introduced to the CWM Onesimus Project while working on their final presentation on the Peer Mediation, Peace, Wellness and Resilience in Children programme before the graduation held at IUC on 21 November.



About TIM

The TIM programme is a key CWM initiative in equipping youth for lifelong involvement with the mission of the church by helping them develop skills for effective Christian witness.

TIM sees participants from various member churches and ecumenical partners coming together for 26 weeks of intensive mission training. They can expect to be empowered with a new practical and radical understanding of what witnessing to Christ means – a pedagogy that has positively impacted the lives of over 400 youth to date. TIM graduates go on to become living expressions of CWM's ethos of "partnership in mission."

"Mission is God's and young people and adults are invited to share in God's mission... regardless of the level of their exposure and involvement in the mission of the church," said Rev. Dr Amelia Koh-Butler, CWM Mission Secretary for Education and Empowerment.



CWM Celebrates Rich History—And Deep Commitment—With World Communion of Reformed Churches

The Council for World Mission (CWM) celebrated its deepening missiological partnership with the World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC) at a roundtable that also celebrated 150 years of the WCRC's history.

The roundtable, held in Hannover, Germany from 5-9 December, drew global ecumenical organizations to reflect on a shared path forward toward justice, unity, and transformative action.

Themed “The WCRC Today: 150 Years and Counting,” the roundtable was not only a commemoration but also a strategic moment of collaboration and renewal that WCRC President Najla Kassab described as a “new time of envisioning together.”

Spiritual, strong, strategic

Dr Sudipta Singh, CWM Deputy General Secretary, shared that CWM and WCRC have forged a unique, deeply-rooted ecumenical collaboration committed to justice, peace, and life in its fullness for all.

“The partnership of the Council for World Mission with the World Communion of Reformed Churches is spiritual, strong, and strategic based on a prophetic witness that is directed towards radical discipleship and transformative change of both church and society,” Singh reflected.



The partnership between CWM and WCRC, he added, promotes hope by demonstrating how shared faith and unified action can address the world's crises today.

"This relationship has a rich history," Singh said, noting that 30 of CWM's 32 member churches are also a part of WCRC.

He also pointed out that the Accra Confession, now in its 20th year, significantly influenced CWM in defining a "theology of Empire," and in strategically creating and growing collaborations such as the New International Financial and Economic Architecture, and programmes such as Theological Education for an Economy of Life, that foster life-flourishing communities.

"The partnership between CWM and WCRC is evidence of the transformative power of ecumenical collaboration," Singh said. "Together, these organisations embody the hope and courage needed to address systemic injustices, advocating for a world with justice, equity, and peace."

He concluded by pledging a continued commitment to unity, mutual support, and innovative action with CWM and WCRC. "The journey ahead is one of collaboration, with an unwavering focus on fostering life-flourishing

communities and challenging oppressive systems," he said. "As we both embrace the commitment to promoting life in its fullness for all, CWM and WCRC must continue to inspire our member churches and partners to live out the hope of rising to life together for transformation."





General Secretary's Christmas Message 2024: A Call to Embrace Human Fragility and Love

Dear sisters and brothers in Christ, grace and peace to you in this blessed season of Advent!

As we reflect on the profound mystery of Christmas, our hearts are filled with both the beauty of the season and the painful realities of our world wounded by ongoing conflicts and despair. The land where Jesus Christ, the prince of peace, was born remains engulfed in turmoil. The ongoing conflict in the Middle East and several regions across the world are marked by extreme levels of violence, destruction, and loss of countless lives. These conflicts not only devastated human lives but deepened

the scars on the planet, which is already groaning under the weight of exploitation.

Today, the fragility of our world is a stark reminder of our shared vulnerability. Families are displaced, homes are reduced to rubble, and lives are cut short. Democracies are becoming dysfunctional, nations are turning towards authoritarianism, and the very fabric of our existence is increasingly becoming fragile and vulnerable.

In such a time as this, what does it mean to celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ, a vulnerable child in a humble manger? How does this fragile incarnation speak hope into our wounded world? Human fragility and the earth's vulnerability are not failures to be overcome but sacred truths to be embraced.

Christmas invites us to the radical mystery of Kenosis—God emptying Himself, taking on human fragility, and entering into the brokenness of



our world. In the vulnerability of a newborn, Jesus revealed the power of God's solidarity with the suffering humanity. His birth under the shadow of socio-political and religious oppression was a divine proclamation that love, compassion and care are the true solutions to the cycles of violence and despair.

By taking human fragility and being born into this world, Jesus became Immanuel, God who chose to be "with us" and became vulnerable in sharing our sufferings. By becoming Immanuel, Jesus also expressed the strongest form of love. God in Jesus is a God who is "weak in power but strong in love". This love is not passive; it is active and transformative.

As Professor C. S. Song affirms, God did not come to sit on a throne but to live with the people. A compassionate person does not hide or flee from those suffering but chooses solidarity with them and share in their suffering. It is because of such compassion that Jesus chose to be with us.

Jesus' birth teaches us that compassion is the pathway to healing and justice. It also teaches us that true strength is not found in domination but in the willingness to love and show compassion. The story of Christmas challenges us to see the suffering of others not as distant tragedies but as shared burdens that call us all to respond. This is the kenotic message of the incarnation that we need to embrace.

In this season, when the shadow of conflict darkens our societies, we are reminded that Jesus' birth is actually to confront the world's brokenness with courage, love, and compassion and to bring peace. This is how we can spread the transforming hope in this broken world. This hope takes root in the community. It grows when we stand in solidarity with those who suffer.



As a global community of churches in mission, let us recommit ourselves to the work of reconciliation and care. Let us embrace our shared fragility as the foundation for a more compassionate and just world.

May the Prince of Peace be born freshly in our hearts and through our actions, inspiring us to create a world where every person and the planet itself can flourish.

I wish you all a peace-filled Christmas!

Rev. Dr Jooseop Keum
General Secretary,
Council for World Mission



CWM Staff New Year Communion Service Sounds Call to Rise, Shine, and Serve

Staff across all three offices of the Council for World Mission (CWM) came together to usher in the new year with a communion service held in the Singapore Office on 6 January.

The service opened with a word of prayer by Rev. Daimon Mkandawire, Mission Secretary for Ecology and Economy, after which Rev. Dr Jooseop Keum, CWM General Secretary, offered his first staff sermon for the new year.

Preaching from both Isaiah 42:1-7 and John 17:18-23, Keum reminded the staff to renew their commitment to rise, shine, and serve in their various appointments and capacities in the current period of Epiphany.

We must shine, Keum reflected, because the whole earth remains covered in darkness. “While the sun may lose its light and the moon may become dark, God’s light is eternal and never goes out,” he said. “We are individuals who have become light because God’s glory has come upon us, and we must not only hold onto that light but also share it.”

Keum urged CWM staff, in their many roles across the world, to share the light of God. “Let people see your good, righteous, and faithful deeds and give glory to God in heaven,” he said.

Just as Jesus reflects the love of God to the community around Him, so must CWM exemplify this Christ-like love to the world. “Our mission is to let that love overflow into the world, and we have been sent to fulfill this mission,” declared Keum.



Celebrating the 50th anniversary of the Singapore Consultation

The New Year Communion Service also marked an important date in the history of CWM: the 50th anniversary of the Singapore Consultation, a weeklong meeting held from 31 December 1974 to 6 January 1975 that brought together 56 representatives from churches that had been engaged in foreign missions and churches established through those missions.

The Singapore Consultation agreed that CWM's current structure was unhelpful as it maintained donor-recipient relationships which failed to give space for true collaboration. The fruit of the consultation was a document, "Sharing in One World Mission," that shared the vision of the ecumenical nature and outlook of a new CWM. That new structure—based on equal partnership and mutuality—came into being in 1977.

"Today, we joyfully celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Singapore Consultation," said Keum. "We take pride in this achievement because it has been accomplished not through sudden invention, but through a long struggle within the entire CWM family—through the collective commitments and efforts of all participants that have united us as one family in God's mission."

Keum reflected that it was faith which guided the Singapore Consultation. "Faith is the assurance of God's faithfulness to us, even when we live in an uncertain world, navigating paths not marked on any map and moving toward an unknown future," he said. "Faith serves as a source of courage to be prophetic—enabling us to embody future visions and values in the present, as those gathered here today 50 years ago in Singapore."

2025

Janet McConnell



**Mission Secretary
for Social Justice
and the Caribbean
Region**

CWM Welcomes New Mission Secretary for Social Justice and the Caribbean Region

The Council for World Mission (CWM) welcomes Janet Marie McConnell as the Mission Secretary (MS) for Social Justice and the Caribbean Region. McConnell began her appointment on 1 January 2025.

As MS for Social Justice, McConnell will develop proposals and strategies for guiding member churches in the mission of social justice and advocating for the poor and marginalised while being based at CWM's London Office.

“CWM, in my opinion, has come to represent itself as an organisation that offers ever-evolving opportunities to advance the cause of Jesus Christ for all of God’s creation,” said McConnell. “It is to this that I find alignment and look forward to making my contribution as a member of the CWM team, and to add to the heritage of the organisation’s work.” McConnell has also served with CWM as a former Trustee.

She has served the United Church in Jamaica and the Cayman Islands (UCJCI) for 17 years as Deputy General Secretary, Director of Education for Ministry and Mission, Coordinator of Mission Programmes, and Manager of Human and Mission Resources. She holds a BSc in Nursing, an MA in Transformational Leadership, and a postgraduate diploma in Human Resource Management.



CWM Visits Presbyterian Church of Trinidad and Tobago, Resumes Partnership Dialogue

Rev. Dr Jooseop Keum, General Secretary of the Council for World Mission (CWM) visited the Presbyterian Church of Trinidad and Tobago (PCTT) from 11-13 January.

The visit resumed the process that will see PCTT becoming a full member of CWM's global family of churches. The invitation to PCTT to join CWM was halted with the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020. As the world settles into a post-pandemic landscape,

discussions have been underway to induct new members into CWM.

Keum was warmly received by both the PCTT Moderator and General Secretary, the Rt. Rev. Daniel Chance, and Mr P.E. Ashford D. Tamby respectively, as well as other PCTT leaders.

In his greetings to PCTT, Keum spoke on the deep and historic relationship that the two organisations share, one that illustrates the enduring power of faith and the transformative potential of interdenominational co-operation.

"The London Missionary Society (LMS), CWM's predecessor, created a profound and inspiring connection with Trinidad and Tobago in the early 19th century," revealed Keum who highlighted the founding of PCTT by LMS missionaries including Thomas Adam and Rev. Rayner who landed on the shores of Trinidad and Tobago in 1809.

Even though Trinidad and Tobago faced immense challenges such as fierce resistance from colonial powers, the plight of freed slaves, and the needs of indentured laborers from India, they built learning institutions and churches which would shape minds and establish the moral compass that continue to shape contemporary Trinidadian and Tobagonian society today. Recently, Trinidad and Tobago's government declared a state of emergency following gun violence.

The faith community in Trinidad and Tobago and the country at large still grapple with many significant societal challenges from poverty, inequality, crime, and climate change.

While lauding the PCTT's unceasing faith in facing these issues, Keum also highlighted the benefits that the impending partnership will forge by allowing the church an amplified voice on these critical difficulties, be it on the local, regional, and global levels.

"This potential partnership with the CWM offers immense opportunities for mutual growth and impact. Joining the CWM network will provide the PCTT with access to a wealth of resources – from financial support and theological training programmes to leadership development opportunities," explained Keum who also revealed that a specially appointed Membership Task Force will be working with PCTT to finalise the membership process by the next CWM Annual Members Meeting in June.

Keum also met with the various PCTT boards of governance as well as the Susamachar Presbyterian Church—the home church of the largest PCTT congregation and birthplace of several pivotal institutions, including the Presbyterian Theological College, Teacher's College, and Naparima College, the first Presbyterian secondary school in the country.

Keum also attended and delivered greetings on behalf of CWM at the induction of Rev. Shirvan Siloch at the Barrackpore Union Presbyterian Church, where he assumed the office of the Minister of the Barrackpore Pastoral Region, historically a major centre of the rice and sugar industry in the country.





DARE Global Forum 2025 Opens in Harare, Zimbabwe, With the Theme “Aftermath: Beyond Liberation”

The fifth Discernment and Radical Engagement (DARE) Global Forum commenced on 27 January in Harare, Zimbabwe. The first DARE forum to take place in Africa brings together 130 participants under the theme “Aftermath: Beyond Liberation,” to explore and transform theological paradigms inspired by liberation theology, addressing biases, traditions, and responsibilities.

Rev. Dr Jooseop Keum, General Secretary of the Council

for World Mission (CWM), welcomed attendees to what he described as a “cutting-edge platform” for interdisciplinary, interreligious, and intersectional dialogue among scholars, activists, and practitioners committed to liberation and decolonisation. He urged participants to reflect on what lies beyond liberation. “The world faces profound challenges that demand theological engagement, particularly as they intersect with issues of economic inequality, technological advancement, and the ongoing struggle for decolonisation.”

Rev. Dr Kupakwashe Mtata, Principal of the United Theological College (UTC) in Harare, highlighted the importance of a liberation-rooted theology in his welcome remarks. “It must be born from our struggles, woven with our histories, and made manifest in action,” he stated, emphasizing the need for theology to challenge systems of oppression and restore human dignity.

The forum's keynote address, delivered by Prof. Jung Mo Sung from Brazil, provided a critical examination of neoliberalism through a theological perspective. His presentation, "The Neoliberal Theology of Original Sin and the Original Sin of Capitalism," critiqued the exclusionary nature of capitalism and reinterpreted the myth of Adam and Eve as a symbol of human freedom and resistance against unjust systems. Sung described the "original sin" of capitalism as the prioritization of economic efficiency, social insensitivity, and the desire to accumulate unlimited wealth. He called for a utopian vision in which all human beings are treated and seen as creatures endowed with dignity and freedom.

The DARE Global Forum 2025 continues in Harare until 30 January.





Scholars, Activists Converge in Harare for DARE Global Forum 2025

The Discernment and Radical Engagement (DARE) Global Forum 2025 convened in Harare, Zimbabwe, from 27-30 January, bringing together leading scholars, theologians, and activists from around the world.

The forum featured thematic streams, each delving into crucial global issues. Over three days, from 28-30 January, participants presented 10-12 papers per stream, fostering in-depth discussions on pressing social, economic, and theological challenges.

Legacies of Slavery

One of the streams of the forum addressed the Legacies of Slavery. Presentations explored the embodied effects

of historical oppression, the lived experiences of colonised subjects, and the rhythms of liberation.

Modern-Day Slavery

The Modern-Day Slavery stream explored the persistence of exploitative labour systems, human trafficking, and other forms of oppression in the 21st century.

Transformative Ecumenism

The forum also provided a space for reimagining Transformative Ecumenism, where scholars critiqued and creatively explored ecumenical movements from the margins. Participants engaged with alternative theological perspectives emerging from struggles for justice and life, advocating for transformative ecumenism.

Education for Liberation

Education was recognised as a key instrument of liberation through the Educating for Liberation stream. Presenters shared



decolonial interventions, praxis-based approaches, and Indigenous retrievals that challenge dominant knowledge systems.

Inter-religiosities, Racisms, and Anti-Imperial Struggles

The forum also explored the intersections of Inter-religiosities, Racisms, and Anti-Imperial Struggles, scrutinizing systemic exclusions and forging new solidarities. Participants confronted religious purism and transnational collaborationism.

Thematic Workshops: Resisting Oppression, Reimagining Liberation

In addition to the thematic streams, workshops addressed issues such as Empire, Religion, and Genocide, Theology After Gaza, Contemporary Gender Justice, Decolonizing Scripture, Racisms and Exclusions, Daring to Think Out Loud, and Activating Radical Eco-Economic Transformation. These workshops provided platforms for critical and creative discussion, engaging participants in liberation, decolonisation, and epistemologies from the South.

Spotlight on books

Each day of the forum concluded with book presentations, showcasing groundbreaking works that

challenge dominant paradigms. The nine titles presented were: *Liberating People, Planet;* *Confounding the Mighty Stories of Brown Saviors and Their Others;* *Confounding the Mighty Stories of Church, Social Class and Solidarity;* *Religion, Patriarchy and Empire;* *Awake, Emerging, and Connected Meditations on Justice from a Missing Generation;* *God the Child Small, Weak and Curious Subversions;* *Decolonizing Religion and Peacebuilding;* *Indecentes e Indignadas;* and *Serie de Ensaíos Teológicos Indecentes.*

“The conversations initiated in Harare will inspire new collaborations and action-oriented research committed to a decolonising mission,” said CWM Mission Secretary – Discipleship and Dialogue, Rev. Dr Graham McGeoch.



CWM General Secretary's Visit to Malawi Strengthens Commitment to Theological Education for Justice and Liberation

Rev. Dr Jooseop Keum, General Secretary of the Council for World Mission (CWM), visited Zomba Theological University (ZTU) in Malawi on 31 January to give a congratulatory address for the launch of the Theological Education for the Economy of Life (TEEL) Programme in partnership with ZTU.

TEEL arose from CWM's commitment to the Ecumenical Action Plan for a New International Financial and Economic Architecture (NIFEA), a global financial and economic system that links finance to the real economy; is founded on the principles of economic, social and climate justice; accounts for social and ecological tasks; and sets clear limits to greed. NIFEA is jointly organised by CWM, the World Council of Churches, World Communion of Reformed Churches, and Lutheran World Federation.

Describing TEEL as a theological and pedagogical shift, Keum noted that the programme is an integral part of CWM's broader vision in "decolonising theological frameworks, dismantling systems of oppression, and promoting liberation in all its forms."

In his address, Keum also highlighted various ongoing global crises that disproportionately

impact the poor, marginalised, and vulnerable—crises that demand a robust theological response and an equipped generation of theologians and activists who Keum described as being able “address systemic injustices with prophetic courage, build movements for political and economic renewal, and create life-flourishing communities that reflect God’s vision of justice, peace, and abundance.”

“TEEL aims to cultivate a generation of leaders who will act courageously to address systemic injustices and embody the Gospel’s call to solidarity and justice,” expounded Keum who further emphasised that TEEL is not merely an academic undertaking but a spiritual and moral endeavour to build a world that reflects God’s vision of justice, peace, and abundance for all.



In solidarity with the Churches of Christ in Malawi

Following his trip to ZTU, Keum also visited the Churches of Christ in Malawi (CCM) on 1 February. Besides meeting with the CCM Executive Board to discuss the continuing education programme at ZTU that is sponsored by the Presbyterian Church of Korea, Keum also engaged in discussions and dialogue with CCM leadership on enhancing the Mission Support Programmes (MSP) in CCM alongside capacity-building initiatives and community development projects.

He also met with CCM’s Moderator, Rev. Helleni Chiingeni MacDonald, and General Secretary, Rev. Lavert Makwinja, both ZTU graduates who were former recipients of CWM scholarships.



Subsequently, on 2 February, Keum attended a service at Soche East Church, a local CCM parish, as a guest preacher, concluding his four-day visit to Malawi.

AT A
GLANCE

INSIGHT

Member
Church
News



Merry Mission 2024: A Season for Sharing

The Church of South India (CSI) Synod staff celebrated Christmas with the children of CSI Mahimai Illam, Chengalpattu, on 17 December 2024 in a heartwarming event that embodied the spirit of sharing and love. This gathering also witnessed participation from CSI Directors and staff.

The Christmas celebration was presided over by Rev. Allen Livingston, Chairman of the Home and Presbyter of the CSI Chengalpattu Pastorate of the Diocese of Madras. Christinal Susigaram, the Home and School In-charge, extended a heartfelt welcome to all present and shared a brief overview of the ministries and caring efforts of the Home.

The gathering commenced with an opening prayer led by Rev. S. Sam Britto Francis, Director of the Department of Dalit and Adivasi Concerns, CSI Synod, setting a solemn yet joyous tone for the event.

Rev. Christopher Dharmaraj, the CSI-EMS Support Officer, CSI Synod, captivated the children with a magical storytelling session, spreading cheer and inspiration. Rev. J. Jeba Daniel, Director, Department of

the Communications, CSI Synod extended Christmas greetings and heartfelt wishes.

The children reciprocated by sharing their warm wishes, and creating a delightful ambience amidst the exchanges of joy and gratitude. As a gesture of love, gifts were presented to the Home, aptly symbolising the essence of Christmas. The gathering concluded with a hearty fellowship dinner, bringing everyone together in happiness and joy.

This celebration underscored the deep bond between the CSI Synod Staff and the children of CSI Mahimai Illam, inspiring everyone to continue this journey of love and sharing in the years to come.

CSI extends its heartfelt gratitude to the staff of the CSI Synod, the CSI Diocese of Madras, the Chairperson, In-Charges, Wardens, Caretakers, and especially the lovable children of the CSI Mahimai Illam, who made this celebration truly meaningful.

Hope for a Lasting Peace Between Israel and Hamas



UNITED CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH OF SOUTHERN AFRICA

UCCSA Receives the News of the Ceasefire Agreement With Hope for a Lasting Peace Between Israel and Hamas

The United Congregational Church of Southern Africa (UCCSA) stands in solidarity with all those affected by the ongoing conflict between Israel and Hamas. As the potential ceasefire deal unfolds, we emphasize the need for a just and lasting peace that respects the human rights of both Palestinians and Israelis. The UCCSA expresses cautious optimism regarding the recent

draft agreement for a 42-day ceasefire between Israel and Hamas.

This initiative marks a significant step toward alleviating the severe humanitarian crisis in Gaza and restoring hope for peace in the region. The proposed ceasefire entails a halt to hostilities, allowing for the safe return of many Palestinian families to their homes and the release of dozens of Israeli hostages alongside hundreds of Palestinian prisoners. As humanitarian aid begins to flow into Gaza, we recognize this moment as a crucial opportunity to address the urgent needs of those affected by the conflict.

We call upon all parties to honor this ceasefire and ensure that it leads to meaningful negotiations aimed at a lasting peace. This agreement should not merely be a pause in fighting but a vital opportunity for dialogue and reconciliation. The church emphasizes that justice and human



rights for both Palestinians and Israelis are essential foundations for a sustainable peace. As the ceasefire unfolds, it is imperative that the international community supports efforts to safeguard the rights and dignity of all individuals in the region.

NB. In light of these developments, we urge all stakeholders to engage in constructive dialogue that prioritizes justice and the protection of human rights. We echo the words of the prophet Micah who declares the following: **“He has shown you, O mortal, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.” (Micah 6:8)**

The UCCSA believes that this ceasefire is a crucial first step toward ending the violence and encouraging an environment where lasting peace can thrive. We stand in solidarity with all those yearning for peace and justice in the region. The recent draft agreement proposes a 42-day cessation of hostilities, during which hostages may be released and humanitarian aid can flow into Gaza. However, the path to peace requires more than a temporary pause in violence; it demands a commitment to addressing the root causes of the conflict. As faith leaders, we are called to advocate for justice and reconciliation.

As we reflect on the humanitarian crisis in Gaza, we reaffirm our commitment to advocacy for peace, justice,

and liberation for all. Let Gaza live, and may we collectively work towards a future where peace reigns. Empowered by faith, united in purpose: transforming communities and systems for a just and hopeful future.

A Prayer for Peace

We invite all to join in prayer:

Heavenly Father,

We seek Your guidance and grace in this time of uncertainty.

May this ceasefire be a beacon of hope for those suffering in Gaza and beyond.

Grant wisdom to leaders and courage to all who strive for peace.

Let justice roll like a river, and may Your peace reign in our hearts.

Amen.

For more information, please contact the UCCSA office.



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