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Sundays with CWM.
Working and Waiting with God.
2015





The Council for World Mission (CWM) is a worldwide partnership of 31 churches, committed to sharing their resources of people, skills, insights and money to carry out God's mission.

AFRICA

FJKM – Church of Jesus Christ in Madagascar
UCCSA – United Congregational Church of Southern Africa
UCZ – United Church of Zambia
CCM – Churches of Christ in Malawi
UPCSA – Uniting Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa

CARIBBEAN

GCU – Guyana Congregational Union
UCJCI – United Church in Jamaica and the Cayman Islands

EAST ASIA

HKCCCC – Hong Kong Council of the Church of Christ in China
GPM – Presbyterian church of Malaysia (Gereja Presbyterian Malaysia)
PCT – Presbyterian Church in Taiwan
PCS – Presbyterian Church in Singapore
PCK – Presbyterian Church of Korea
PCM – Presbyterian Church of Myanmar

EUROPE

CF – Congregational Federation
UWI – Union of Welsh Independents
URC – United Reformed Church
PCN – Protestant Church in the Netherlands
PCW – Presbyterian Church of Wales

PACIFIC

CUNZ – Congregational Union of New Zealand
KUC – Kiribati Uniting Church
UCPNG – United Church of Papua New Guinea
PCANZ – Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand
CCCS – Congregational Christ Church in Samoa
EKT – Ekalesia Kelisiano Tuvalu
NCC – Nauru Congregational Church
UCSI – United Church in Solomon Islands
CCCAS – Congregational Christian Church in American Samoa

SOUTH ASIA

COB – Church of Bangladesh
CNI – Church of North India
CSI – Church of South India
PCI – Presbyterian Church of India



OUR VISION

“Fullness of Life Through Christ,
for all Creation.”

OUR MISSION

“Called to partnership in Christ to
mutually challenge, encourage,
and equip member churches to
share in God’s mission”

General Secretary's Message

"There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under the heavens (Ecc. 3:1).

Each New Year comes wrapped up in hope; it is the miracle of God's complete character on display. The start of every year holds the promise of new beginnings and new directions,

of refreshed vigour and limitless possibilities. As adults, this is perhaps the one time each year we all approach our lives as children do – wondrously imaginative and daringly confident, looking to the future, buoyant with hope. It is important to hold this moment sacred because as the year unravels, our hope is tested by the stubborn circumstances of life; and the fragility of our humanity slowly takes over and we lose that spark that made everything possible only a few months ago. It is in those moments, when fear and cynicism consume us and threaten to take over our lives that the gift of hope comes alive and we find prayer to be God's instrument of connection with the sufficient grace, God's grace. Through prayer we are drawn out of the abyss of gloom, reliant upon God's miracle of ever new beginnings, resilient in determination and ready to join the writer in embracing the times and seasons as those which keep us connected to the God of hope. Indeed King Solomon is right - "There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under the heavens (Ecc. 3:1).

Throughout this year CWM invites us all on the journey to 52 weeks of reflections, drawing on stories from individuals and churches, meditations from scripture and life's experiences, images and poetry. Through these readings, we join each other in prayers, causing our lives to intersect in multiple ways, sharing our adversities and rejoicing in our accomplishments together. This invitation to reflection and prayer is simultaneously an



invitation to embrace the times – time to give birth to new ways of being in community with others and to kill the selfishness that deprives us of fellowship; time to participate in just activities so that all may experience peace and to part company with such activities that lead to the destruction of God’s creation; time to embrace the spirit of fortitude and to mourn the loss of courage... “a time for everything” (see Ecc. 3:2-8).

You will find that the reflections in this volume weave a beautiful tapestry of narratives, each distinct yet related, reflecting the richness of our unity in diversity. It is my hope that reading these stories and praying together through these weeks will bring us all closer together in strength and love, as a community witnessing to the love and peace of God. I pray with you that 2015 will be a hope-filled year throughout; and that in following Jesus Christ, our Lord, we will be renewed in strength each step of the way.

Prayer

O God, who has made everything beautiful in its time, setting eternity in the human heart, cause us to be always amazed by the things you do from beginning to end. Help us to enjoy the gift of being happy while doing good, so that everyone may eat and drink, and find satisfaction in her toil (from Ecc. 3:9-13).

Collin I. Cowan (Rev. Dr.)
General Secretary of CWM

Programme Secretary's Message

Another year is dawning, dear Father, let it be,
In working or in waiting, another year with Thee;
Another year of progress, another year of praise,
Another year of proving, Thy presence all the days.

Another year of mercies, of faithfulness and grace,
Another year of gladness in the shining of Thy face;
Another year of leaning upon Thy loving breast;
Another year of trusting, of quiet, happy rest.

Another year of service, of witness for Thy love,
Another year of training for holier work above.
Another year is dawning, dear Father, let it be
On earth, or else in Heaven, another year for Thee.

Frances R. Havergal



The above hymn is familiar to many Christians and is sung especially at watchnight service which is held on New Year's Eve and ends after midnight. At the service, Christians would review the past year and make confession, and then prepare for the year ahead by praying and resolving for "another year of service another year of training for holier work above." In fact, as Christians sing this hymn, they are uttering a prayer of their hopes and dedication to God.

CWM Prayer Book 2015 takes a different shape, narrating the stories narrated of our member churches and partners-in-mission. The stories are weaved with the meditations, poems and images for 52 weeks and interspersed with important Christian holy days. The stories beckon us to reflect, meditate and sharing our lives together as a community of God's people even though we are separated geographically. The spiritual line that links us together is our remembrance of each other in prayer and spirit. While some of the stories reflect the individual joys and struggles, there are stories that envision the hopes of the member churches for the life of their communities. The stories reflect very much the sentiments of the abovementioned hymn, that of quietly trusting in God's grace and faithfulness while working, waiting and proving God's presence all the days of their lives.

I pray that you find the "Sundays with CWM: A Year of Working and Waiting with God" Prayer Book 2015 an inspiration in your spiritual journey with God in Jesus Christ, finding "gladness in the shining" of God's face daily.

Tan, Yak-hwee (Rev. Dr.)

Programme Secretary, Reflection and Research

My prayers and reflections in January 2015...

Sunday, 4 January 2015 (2nd Sunday after Christmas)

Bible Readings: Psalm 98; Jeremiah 31:7-14; John 1:10-18



Then shall the maidens rejoice in the dance,
and the young men and the old shall be merry.

I will turn their mourning into joy,
I will comfort them, and give them gladness for sorrow.
I will feast the soul of the priests with abundance,
and my people shall be satisfied with my goodness,
says the LORD."

Jeremiah 31:13-14 (RSV)

(Image Source: http://livingthelectionary.blogspot.co.uk/2010_12_01_archive.html)

Meditation on Jeremiah 31:7-14

Rejoice in God's Justice:

The scripture portions call for a time of jubilation and thanksgiving to God for the marvellous things God has done in the past, for revealing his love in the present and extending his grace to the future. God reveals himself through human history particularly through the acts of creation and liberation. "I will build you and you shall be built" (Jer. 31:4) is a powerful promise of God. God of justice has been at work in the lives of people to establish an inclusive community. This is the ultimate goal of the day of judgement. His desire to turn mourning into joy (Jer. 31:8-14) indicates that there shall be no more injustice, no more exploitation and no more greed. God who is interested in the well-being of his creation took the human form in order to dwell among us and to reveal himself as more tangible than ever before (Jn. 1:14). He identified with our life situations and granted us hope through the victory on the cross. Now we share in the power of God by believing in him (Jn. 1:12) and become co-workers with God by serving the people around us. May God help us in this endeavour.

K. James Cecil Victor
CSI, India

Tuesday, 6 January 2015 (Epiphany of the Lord)

Bible Readings: Psalm 72:1-7, 10-14; Isaiah 60:1-6; Matthew 2:1-12



Give the king thy justice, O God,
and thy righteousness to the royal son!
May he Judge thy people with righteousness,
and thy poor with justice!
Let the mountains bear prosperity
for the people,
and the hills, in righteousness!
May he defend the cause of the poor
of the people,
give deliverance to the needy,
and crush the oppressor!

Psalm 72:1-4 (RSV)

(Image source: <http://getupwithgod.com/epiphany/happy-epiphany/>)

Sunday, 11 January 2015 (Baptism of the Lord)

Bible Readings: Psalm 29; Genesis 1:1-5; Mark 1:4-11

The Lord is here

The Lord is here

His Spirit is with us

We need not fear

His Spirit is with us

We abide in peace

His Spirit is with us

We are immersed in love

His Spirit is with us

We continue in hope

His Spirit is with us

We rejoice in faith

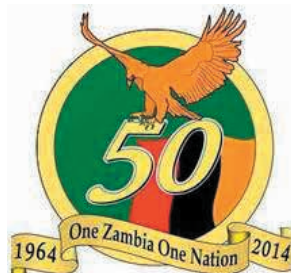
His Spirit is with us

Lord, help us to know that you are here and with us now,
That your Spirit is with us and abides with us always.

(Source: *The Open Gate: Celtic prayers for growing spiritually* by David Adam)

United Church of Zambia

The United Church of Zambia is strategic to the unity of the country. We started to demonstrate to the nation the importance of unity before Zambia became independent. Our first union took place on 1st December 1945 at Chitambo Mission, when the London Missionary Society (now CWM) united with the Church of Scotland to form Church of Central Africa in Rhodesia (CCAR). The second union was on 26th July 1958 at Mindolo, when the Church of Central Africa in Rhodesia came together with the European and Free Congregations of the Copperbelt to form the United Church of Central Africa in Rhodesia (UCCAR). This union led to the birth of Zambia as a nation on 24th



October 1964, and a few months later the birth of the United Church of Zambia on 16th January 1965 at Mindolo after the union of the Church of Barotseland, the Zambia District of the Methodist Church and the United Church of Central Africa in Rhodesia.

We therefore feel duty bound to pray for the peace and stability of our nation even as we go to the polls in 2016.

Prayer Requests:

1. Pray for Zambia's General Elections and the peace and stability of the country.
2. Pray for Golden Jubilee Celebrations of UCZ, the main event to be held from 15th-18th January, to make this a success to the glory of God.
3. Pray for construction of a UCZ Investment Complex, especially for the fundraisings.

Dennis Mbata Sikazwe
UCZ, Zambia

Sunday, 18 January 2015 (2nd Sunday after the Epiphany)

Bible Readings: Psalm 139:1-6, 13-18; 1 Samuel 3:1-10 [11-20]; John 1:43-51

Missional Story from Parfaite: Mission on Kiriritimati

God appointed myself and my husband, SamoeliJaona to be His missionaries to work with the Kiribati Uniting Church (KUC) as Partners in Mission. My main work consists in Dental Surgery and my husband's in teaching.

I work at the hospital where religion is not the main business. But we have functions whenever we welcome visitors or farewell them. Kiribati people give big importance to prayers, and during those ceremonies our Medical Officer in Charge appoints me to lead them in prayer knowing that I am a missionary dentist. I feel so privileged and thankful to God for allowing me to perform that duty for Him.

Lately two Kiribati patients who could understand English were admitted in hospital and we paid them and their family visits and prayed for and with them, to support them in their trials.



At the school, my husband does not work as an ordained minister, though he is one. But when needed, he performs that job: this year, he baptized a child when no minister was available to officiate; he led Holy Communions in the absence of the chaplain. On some occasions, he leads the school morning devotions.

Praise be to God.

Prayer Requests:

1. Pray for God's protection and provision for all of those who serve the Lord Jesus all over the world.
2. Give thanks to God for having placed us where we are to serve Him in sharing the Good News through our work, our living and our witnessing Him.

**Parfaite Rasolonjanahary
FJKM, Madagascar to KUC**

Sundays with CWM 2015 13

I will follow you wherever you go

Christ, you are calling.
 In the poor,
 in the sick,
 in the hungry,
 in the dying,
 you are waiting for me.

Christ, you are calling.
 In the hated,
 in the hopeless,
 in the helpless,
 in the haunted,
 you are waiting for me.

Christ, you are calling.
 In the homeless,
 in the stranger,
 in the children,
 in me,
 you are waiting for me.

I want to follow you, Christ Jesus,
 so when you call,
 help me to hear your voice.
 When you beckon,
 help me not to look back.
 In the face of the unfamiliar
 strengthen my commitment
 and make me fit for your kingdom.

Francis Brien

(Source: What Does the Lord Require? A New Anthology of Prayers and Songs for Worship and Mission compiled by Francis Brien)

Sunday, 25 January 2015 (3rd Sunday after the Epiphany)

Bible Readings: Psalm 62:5-12; Jonah 3:1-5, 10; Mark 1:14-20



And passing along by the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and Andrew the brother of Simon casting a net in the sea; for they were fishermen. And Jesus said to them, “Follow me and I will make you become fishers of men.” And immediately they left their nets and followed him.

Mark 1:16-18 (RSV)

(Image source: <http://www.disciplemagazine.com/www/articles/102.16>)

Gereja Presbyterian Malaysia



GPM “**Church Without Walls**” launched last August is a 10-year plan that aims to make more missional congregations reaching out to the community through Christian witnessing and services. There are four strategic priorities: **Church Growth, Kingdom Expansion, Impacting Communities** and **Nation Building**. These priorities are to be achieved through involvement of the congregations in six sectors of the society, namely, **Government & Market Place, Environment & Creation Care, Family, Healthcare & Social Care, Education** and **Media, Arts & Culture**.

10-Year Faith Plan



In 2015 the emphasis will be on Family sector and Healthcare & Social Care sector with the view to strengthen the family through family worship, prayer and Bible study, culminating in participation in mission, discipleship training and serving the community as family units.

Prayer Requests:

1. Pray for all congregations participating actively in “Church Without Walls” to build a transformed reformed church of 20,000 by 2020.
2. Pray that the freedom of religion as guaranteed in the nation’s Federal Constitution will be upheld and that there is unrestricted liberty to practise, profess and propagate our faith. Pray for God’s intervention in the face of increasing discrimination and intimidation against His people arising from Islamization.
3. Pray for the calling and the training of youth and young to assume the leadership roles of the church.
4. Pray for church unity and holiness of God’s children.

Cheh Liang Mok
GPM, Malaysia

My prayers and reflections in February 2015...



Presbyterian Church of India

The PCI General Assembly has laid the Foundation Stone of its long cherished project: CENTRE FOR CAPACITY BUILDING AND EMPOWERMENT at Mawkyasiang, New Shillong. Rev. Dr. Collin I Cowan, the General Secretary of CWM has laid the Foundation Stone on 5th May, 2014 in the presence of Rev. Dr. Jerry Pillay, General Secretary of WCRC and Rev. D.C Haia, Moderator of PCI and other Church Leaders and dignitaries.

The main objectives of the Centre:



1) Conduct short term training on Capacity Building and Empowering Women and youth at all levels.

2) Organizing seminars, workshops, consultations and conference on contemporary issues.

- 3) Conduct dialogue and interface meetings for peace and reconciliation.
- 4) Conduction research and analytical study on Human Rights, Justice & Peace, Environment Sustainable Development, etc.

Prayer Requests:

1. For victims of recent floods and landslides in different parts of India.
2. For peace and tranquillity between India and Pakistan in the border area.
3. For the Mission and Evangelism work of PCI in different parts of India and in its global mission field.
4. For the new believers for firm and strong faith in Christ and also for those who are persecuted because of their new faith in Christ.
5. For Christians in different parts of the world who are facing persecutions and for the martyrs. Pray that the blood of the martyrs continues to be the Gospel seeds that produce fruits a hundredfold.

David T. Lhouvum
PCI, India

Sunday, 8 February 2015 (5th Sunday after the Epiphany)

Bible Readings: Psalm 147:1-11, 20c; Isaiah 40:21-31; Mark 1:29-39

We wait for you to ache

With the energy we have,
we begin the day,
waiting and watching and hoping.

We wait,
not clear about our waiting.
But filled with a restlessness,
daring to imagine
that you are not finished yet –
so we wait
patiently, impatiently,
restlessly, confidently,
quaking and fearful,
boldly and daring.

Your sovereign decree stands clear
and we do not doubt.

We wait for you to dissolve in tender tears.

Your impervious rule takes no prisoners,
we wait for you to ache and hurt and care over us
and with us
and beyond us.

Cry with us the brutality
grieve with us the misery
tremble with us the poverty and hurt.

Attend to us – by attending in power and in mercy,
remake this alien world into our proper home.

We pray in the name of the utterly homeless one,
even Jesus.

Amen.

(Source: Awed to Heaven, Rooted in Earth: Prayers of Walter Brueggemann)



This week is World Interfaith Harmony Week, as designated by the United Nation. We would like to share several approaches to mission which we affirm:

- ❖ Mission as participation with others in the processes of humanization, and missiologies arising from that search for good community;
- ❖ Mission as understanding the many and distinct ways in which salvation is experienced in the lives of religious communities;
- ❖ Mission as sharing the gospel which embraces the wisdom of all religions, because all religions contain gifts of God to the nations for true and good life.

Source: The Golden Rule (UN Photo/Milton Grant) (Image)

The People of god Among All God's Peoples: Frontiers in Christian Mission, Report from a theological Roundtable Sponsored by the Christian Conference of Asia and the Council for World Mission November 11-17, 1999, edited by Philip L. Wickeri

February

Sunday, 15 February 2015 (6th Sunday after the Epiphany)

Bible Readings: Psalm 30; 2 Kings 5:1-14; Mark 1:40-45

Touch me

Come, Lord Jesus,

touch me

with love, life-giving as light,

to quiet my anger a little,

and gentle my desperation,

to soften my fears some

and sooth the knots of my cynicism,

to wipe away the tears from my eyes

and ease the pains in my body and soul,

to reconcile me to myself

and then to the people around me,

and then nation to nation,

that none shall learn war any more,

but turn to feed the hungry,

house the homeless

and care compassionately

for the least of our brothers and sisters.

Reshape me in your wholeness

to be a healing person, Lord.

(Source: *Guerrillas of Grace: Prayers for the Battle* by Ted Loder)

CWM European Region



The 2015 European Regional programme will look to build on the excellent work that has taken place throughout 2014. The programmes of the previous year served to reinforce partnerships across our members and ecumenical partners, develop a confident and skilled network of young people, advance the cause of Fresh Expressions in our member churches and celebrate the work of Christians across Europe and the world that serve the neediest people in our societies.

In 2015 CWM Europe will look to further connect young people with pioneer ministry through an Exploration Programme with the Protestant Church in the Netherlands. This programme will expose young people to the need for and work of new expressions of church and community by giving them the opportunity to join in. CWM Europe will also explore developing a programme looking at Mission with Children, ensuring that European member churches value and include children as integral parts of their communities. As well as this the Mission House in Amsterdam will celebrate its 10 year anniversary in 2015 by holding an “International Symposium on Volunteering” reflecting on the excellent work that its volunteers do in the local community.

CWM Europe will further develop its programme on missional church and leadership by bringing together practitioners of fresh expressions of church and theological educators to focus the discussion on how member churches can best equip church leaders to respond to the needs of contemporary society.

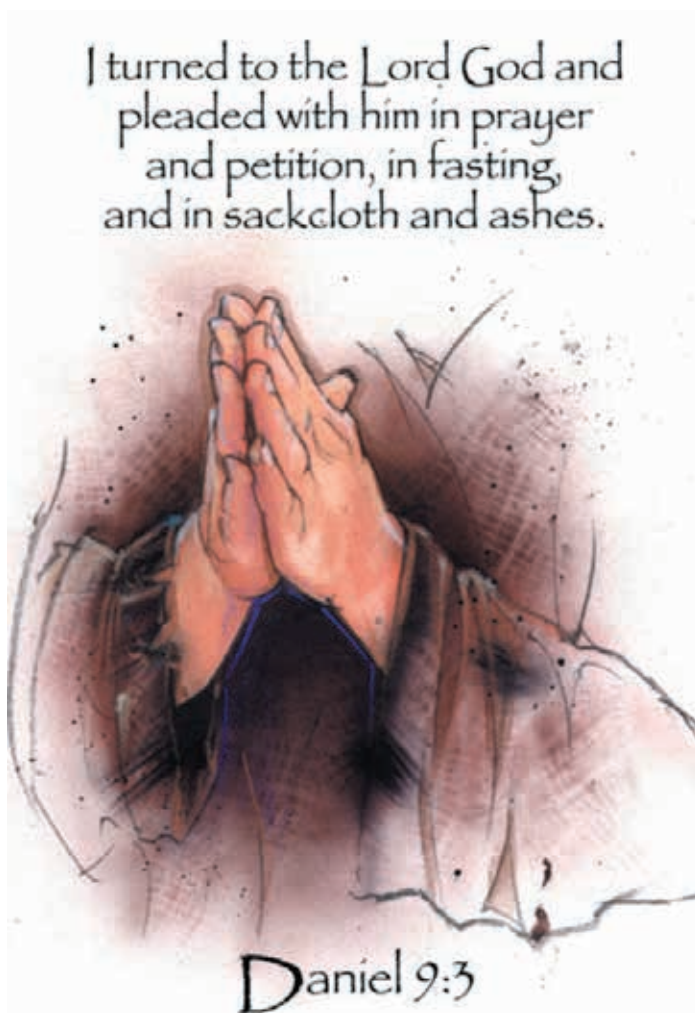
Prayer Requests:

1. That the young people that the European Region works with continue to grow in Christ.
2. That fresh expressions of church will continue to develop within the CWM European member churches.
3. That those people that the Face to Face programme will look to connect with can feel the love and grace of God through those that are servants of God’s mission.
4. Give thanks to God for the past 10 years of the Mission House, its volunteers and the extraordinary work the young people have done in and around Amsterdam. We pray for its continued blessing.

Wayne Hawkins
CWM Europe, UK

Wednesday, 18 February 2015 (Ash Wednesday)

Bible Readings: Psalm 51:1-17; Isaiah 58:1-12; Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21



(Image source: <http://www.saintjohnschurch.info/Lent.php>)

Sunday, 22 February 2015 (1st Sunday in Lent)

Bible Readings: Psalm 25:1-10; Genesis 9:8-17; Mark 1:9-15



**“All the paths of the Lord are steadfast love and faithfulness,
for those who keep his covenant and his testimonies.”**

Psalm 25:10 (RSV)

(Image source: <http://www.amoranossasenhora.com.br/2014/02/ato-de-perfeito-amor-a-deus/>)

Assisting people affected with disasters

I joined SAF/FJKM in May, 2007 as a missionary from the United Church of Zambia. SAF/FJKM is a department of development of Church of Jesus Christ in Madagascar (FJKM). I am in the program of Disaster Risk Management (DRM).

The work in DRM has been very challenging and inspirational in that it has seen me reach out to most parts of the country of Madagascar wherever there have been some disasters and render humanitarian assistance to the affected people/communities.

Madagascar is prone to cyclones

affecting the country every year. People are displaced and lose their only means of livelihood by the catastrophic disaster. It is in times like this that FJKM through SAF/FJKM moves in to assist the vulnerable people through distribution of life saving items such as food, clothes, agricultural seeds, basic farming tools, medicines, etc. In addition, the church helps out to repair and rehabilitate some of the damaged infrastructure so as to get the affected people back to as normal life as before the disaster. With the international financial support through Action by Churches Together Alliance, I participate in the implementation of assisting the affected victims of disaster. For me, this is scripture being fulfilled in Matthew 25:35 "For I was hungry ..., I was thirsty ..., I needed clothes ..."



Prayer Requests:

1. Pray for the vulnerable communities in disaster prone areas to develop resilience to survive the impacts of unavoidable disasters.
2. Pray for more humanitarian resources to be available to assist those affected with disasters to resettle back to as normal life as before.
3. Pray for protection and safety for people involved in humanitarian work as they travel and work in disaster affected areas.
4. Pray for the affected people receive assistance through the church may see the love of God and be drawn to Christianity to serve God.

Japhet Asukile
UCZ, Zambia to FJKM

My prayers and reflections in March 2015...

Sunday, 1 March 2015 (2nd Sunday in Lent)

Bible Readings: Psalm 22:23-31; Genesis 17:1-7, 15-16; Mark 8:31-38

Meditation on Genesis 17:1-7

By human standards Abraham and Sarah are the last couple to be considered for making a great nation. But God works in different ways than we do. We look for the ideal condition where there is already possibility and hope. But God Almighty looks for the most impossible and the most hopeless situation to start with. Abraham and Sarah were a hopeless case, but God gave them hope in their old age—Isaac. God makes the hopeless hopeful.

Jesus' death and resurrection is another example of God bringing hope out of hopelessness. Jesus explained God's plan to His disciples. The Son of Man was going to Jerusalem and He would be rejected and die on a cross and rise on the third day. By human standards you need a palace and a powerful army to enthrone a great king. But God's means of bringing forth the King of Kings was a cross and a tomb. God transformed the cross from a place of shame to a place of victory. God took the tomb and made it a womb that brings forth life everlasting. God brings life out of lifelessness.

Are there situations in your life that seem hopeless? Our Heavenly Father will make hope possible even if things are impossibly hopeless.

The Psalmist says,

“For He has not despised or disdained
the suffering of the afflicted one;
He has not hidden his face from him
but has listened to his cry for help.” (Psalm 22:24)

**Sim Joo Yee
GPM, Malaysia**



And he began to teach them that the Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again.

Mark 8:31 (RSV)

(Image source: <http://samuelkee.com/resources/hope-catechism/>)

Sunday, 8 March 2015 (3rd Sunday in Lent)

Bible Readings: Psalm 19; Exodus 20:1-17; John 2:13-22

From the place where we are right

From the place where we are right
Flowers will never grow
In the spring.

The place where we are right
Is hard and trampled
Like a yard.

But doubts and loves
Dig up the world
Like a mole, a plow.
And a whisper will be heard in the place
Where the ruined
House once stood.

- Yehuda Amichai

(Source:

http://www.journeywithjesus.net/PoemsAndPrayers/Yehuda_Amichai_The_Place_Where_We_Are_Right.shtml)

CWM East Asia Region



At the recent East Asia Regional Assembly in Hong Kong, EAR highlighted women and youth in the church to be discussed as important issues within the region. Each of our member churches is struggling with gender equality in corporate and church leadership. According to the annual plan, HKCCCC will visit PCT Women's Work Committee. And the youth representatives from each member church have worked together using Facebook Fan Page, updating their own news and discussing the cooperation programme.

The EAR will have a Round Table Meeting from 16-20 March 2015 in Seoul, Korea to be hosted by the Presbyterian Church of Korea (PCK). Three (3) delegates are going to be invited from each member church: one for Mission Support Programme (MSP), one for Capacity Development Fund (CDF) and CWM director.

The pending issues for the meeting are the MSP process, CDF guide line and application and mission priorities.

Prayer Requests:

1. Pray for the member churches in East Asia Region which put their efforts into being a mediator between the citizens and the government: last year, we encountered Occupying Central for the nominated executive election in 2017 in Hong Kong, Sunflower Student Movement against government procedural injustice in Taiwan, conflicts between Muslim government and Chinese society in Malaysia, North and South Korea issue in Korea, Aung San Suu Kyi leading the democratic movement against the military government, and the economy and population issue in Singapore.
2. Pray for the women and youth in the region that they might be strengthened in faith and hope.
3. Pray for PCT's 150 anniversary which will be held on April 5.
4. Pray for GPM's 5th year of the 10-year plan "Church Without Walls"

Tseng Wei Chung
CWM EAR, Taiwan

Sunday, 15 March 2015 (4th Sunday in Lent)

Bible Readings: Psalm 107:1-3, 17-22; Numbers 21:4-9; John 3:14-21



[“...] And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.” For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. For God sent the Son into the world, not to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through him.

John 3:14-17 (RSV)

(Image source: <http://slangcath.wordpress.com/2010/03/27/jesus-lifted-up/>)

Church of North India



The Church of North India is part of the One Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church, the Body of Christ which He is building up out of persons of all generations and races.

We thank God for all the blessings rendered upon the Church of North India and His divine guidance in carrying out all its activities successfully to glorify His name. We are also grateful to all our Partners for supporting CNI Synod in its various programmes in reaching out to the most vulnerable and deprived communities across India.

Prayer Requests:

1. Kindly pray for the new Leadership of the Church of North India, Moderator-The Most Rev. P. K. Samantaroy, Deputy Moderator- The Rt. Revd. Dr. P. C. Singh, General Secretary-Mr. Alwan Masih and Hony. Treasurer -Mr. Prem Masih; for all the Bishops and Presbyters.
2. Kindly pray for various interventions and programs of the Church of North India such as: spiritual renewal, theological education, children's concern – particularly PDS Hostels for the needy children, Sunday school programme, Stewardship Ambassadors Ministry, sponsorships for scholarship for civil services, women and youth concern, Peace & Interfaith Concern, Subaltern Concern (with the dalit and tribal communities).
3. For all the 27 Dioceses of CNI, Programme Office at Nagpur, various Commissions and Committees of the Church of North India.
4. Generation of resources to carry on the mission of God further according to His will so that year 2014-2015 could be another great year of spiritual growth, service, and fellowship.



Alwan Masih
CNI, India

Sunday, 22 March 2015 (5th Sunday in Lent)

Bible Readings: Psalm 51: 1-12; Jeremiah 31:31-34; John 12:20-33



Have mercy on me, O God,
according to your steadfast love;
according to your abundant mercy
blot out my transgressions.
Wash me thoroughly from
my iniquity,
and cleanse me from
my sin!

Psalm 51:1-2 (NRSV)

(Image source: <http://smile.aleteia.org/en/smiles-en/be-gracious-to-me-o-god/>)

Presbyterian Church in Taiwan

2015 is a very special year in the history of the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan (PCT) because it marks the 150th anniversary of the founding of PCT by an English missionary, James Maxwell, soon followed by a Canadian doctor, George Mackay. We give special thanks for these two pioneers who planted the gospel in the soil of our beautiful island. Today the PCT has 1200 congregations and about 260,000 members.



A variety of nationwide activities will mark a year-long celebration. The major highlights include a national thanksgiving service on Easter Sunday, April 5, an international symposium about Taiwan's role in East Asia, June 23-25 and a Commissioning Service on October 25.

Meanwhile, the PCT will continue to promote the One Plus One evangelical campaign to increase its membership and number of churches and to be vigilant about the momentous events which gripped our island in recent months: a proposal to adopt a service and trade pact with China, a renewed attempt to approve the construction of a fourth nuclear power plant and the widespread use of "gutter oil" in our food products. The PCT has supported the student movement protests and the hunger strike against nuclear power by one of the nation's democratic champions.

Prayer Requests:

1. That the PCT will remain God's agent for justice and renewal in the Taiwan society.
2. That the PCT activities commemorating the 150th anniversary will be smooth and glorify God's name.
3. That Taiwan will continue to enjoy full human rights with a government committed to democratic governance.
4. That the people's health and the environment of Taiwan will be free of damage wrought by corporate greed, unethical manufacturing practice and a culture of corruption.

LYIM Hong-Tiong
PCT, Taiwan

Sunday, 29 March 2015 (Passion Sunday)

Bible Readings: Psalm 31:9-16; Isaiah 50:4-9a; Mark 14:1–15:47



*Then he poured water into a basin, and began to wash the disciples' feet,
and to wipe them with the towel with which he was girded.
He came to Simon Peter; and Peter said to him,
"Lord, do you wash my feet?"
(John 13:5-6, RSV)*

(Image source: <http://deus-det.blogspot.sg/2013/03/washing-feet-reflections-on-john-13.html>)

Uniting Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa



The UPCSA's vision is "To be a reconciled community of Christians exercising a prophetic witness in witness in Christ."



The UPCSA held its General Assembly over the period 12 to 18 July 2014 with the theme "The Church that Jesus prayed for." The Assembly appointed a new moderator Rt. Revd. Mukondi Ramulondi and a new General Secretary, Revd. Lungile Mpetsheni. The new General Secretary's main responsibility is to promote the vision and mission of the Church. His philosophy is "Christian ministry should be understood in light of him who came not to be served but to serve."

The UPCSA places the development of missional congregations as its core priority. Other priorities include evangelism, stewardship, and reconciliation and unity. The Assembly resolved to set aside October as the Mission Month. The Mission and Discipleship Committee makes great efforts towards the promotion of mission awareness and readiness and development of missional congregations. The Committee organised a consultation under the theme "Back to basics." That provoked action among the members of the church. Some of the members engaged on a cycling campaign in promotion of viable and missional congregations. Many of our Congregations have embarked on projects that are aimed at ensuring that people have life abundantly.

Prayer Requests:

1. For UPCSA to be strong and succeed in the endeavour to develop missional congregations.
2. For the ministers of the UPCSA as they engage in the missional work.
3. UPCSA, as per the resolution of the 2014 General Assembly strives to strengthen the communion of the Reformed Churches in Southern Africa through stronger cooperation and unions, as much as God makes it possible.

Lungile Mpetsheni
UPCSA, South Africa

My prayers and reflections in April 2015...

Friday, 3 April 2015 (Good Friday)

Bible Readings: Psalm 22; Isaiah 52:13-53:12; John 18:1–19:42



April

I am poured out like water,
and all my bones are out of joint;
my heart is like wax,
it is melted within my breast;
my strength is dried up like a potsherd,
and my tongue cleaves to my jaws;
thou dost lay me in the dust of death.

Psalm 22:14-15 (RSV)

(Image source: <http://www.theafricanamericanlectionary.org/PopupCulturalAid.asp?LRID=141>)

Sunday, 5 April 2015 (Easter Day)

Bible Readings: Psalm 118:1-2, 14-24; Isaiah 25:6-9; Mark 16:1-8



Credits: idshankles.wordpress.com

Meditation on Mark 16:1-8

If we look at the ending of Mark, we will find a number of footnotes stating the earliest manuscripts do not include vv. 9-20. In other words, Mark did not write this longer ending. Therefore, according to biblical scholars the ending of Mark ends at v. 8, with these words, “So they went out and fled from the tomb, for terror and amazement had seized them; and they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid.” The Gospel of Mark ends with the women who have just been commanded to tell the disciples the Good News that Jesus had been raised from the dead, did not do as instructed. Instead, they ran off in fear.

Oh dear! The Good News that Jesus is alive was never communicated for the world to hear. The Gospel ends in silence and fear. But the sudden and awkward ending, according to many literary critics, was the intention of Mark. Such an ending is to provoke readers to ask several questions concerning the importance of resurrection on Easter Sunday.

Jesus is risen. He is not here. We will not find him in a tomb. He is no longer dead. He has conquered death. Go and tell. This is the wonderful news! The sudden ending of Mark is to ask some questions of us regarding the Good News!

What will I do with this news? Who will I tell? Or am I too fearful to do any of that?

Tan Yak-Hwee
CWM, Singapore



And when the Sabbath was past, Mary Mag'dalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salo'me, bought spices, so that they might go and anoint him. And very early on the first day of the week they went to the tomb when the sun had risen. And they were saying to one another, "Who will roll away the stone for us from the door of the tomb?" And looking up, they saw that the stone was rolled back – it was very large. And entering the tomb, [...]

Mark 16:1-5a (RSV)

(Image source: <http://www.newlife.org/node/1203>)

Sunday, 12 April 2015 (2nd Sunday of Easter)

Bible Readings: Psalm 133; Acts 4:32-35; John 20:19-31



This is my commandment,
that you love one another as I have loved you.
Greater love has no man than this,
that a man lay down his life for his friends.

John 15:12-13 (RSV)

(Image source: http://alittlestonehouse.blogspot.sg/2010/08/sunday-reflections_22.html)

United Reformed Church



In the United Reformed Church we are taking much time this year to think, talk and pray about a significant change in our social and cultural context. Marriage between two persons of the same sex has been allowed by law in England and Wales since March of 2014, and will shortly be legal in Scotland too. We are divided about how to respond. Some of our ministers and churches



believe that a same-sex marriage service, in a church building, could be a very positive expression of Christian ministry, worship and care; others think not. How do we live and serve as one Church, amid our diversity of opinion? We need wisdom and prayer, as we work this out in the coming months.

Another issue in which the United Reformed Church is very varied is in our increasing ethnic and cultural diversity. London in particular is a world city, but all around the land our congregations include Christians whose family roots are in other parts of the world.

We are, ever more visibly, an intercultural church, and we take joy and delight in this rich variety of Christian experience. As we go forward, we ask that all may learn from each in friendship, trust and respect.



Prayer Request:

Pray for the URC that they may learn from each other in friendship, trust and respect as they live and work in the midst of diversity.

Francis Brien
URC, UK

Sunday, 19 April 2015 (3rd Sunday of Easter)

Bible Readings: Psalm 4; Acts 3:12-19; Luke 24:36b-48



Then he said to them, “These are my words which I spoke to you, while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the law of Moses and the prophets and the psalms must be fulfilled.”

Then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures, and said to them, “Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be preached in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things.”

Luke 24:44-48 (RSV)

(Image source: <http://celebrationpublications.org/category/topics/community>)

Kiribati Uniting Church

The recent General Assembly of Kiribati Protestant Church (KPC) was held in last August 2014 in the oldest church named TEITOININGAINA (Morning Star) located in ARORAE, the Southernmost Island in the Kiribati Group, celebrating its 100-year anniversary on the 16th September 2014.

At the Assembly, the KPC changed its name to the Kiribati Uniting Church (KUC). This has marked a new movement of the Church since its financial problem at the turn of the century. With other countless issues at hand including the rise of sea level, dispersion of members over an area of more than 3 million square kilometres, the Church is moving forward in designing a new strategic plan for the next 5 years. Coinciding with the new direction, the new name adopted, marks that the Church is on the move. The new strategic plan consists of its commitment to the ecumenical endeavour, strengthening partnership and empowering its mission at all levels, including enhancing the capacity of leaders and members. Fullness of Life is the overarching theme that will guide the new strategy of the new Kiribati Uniting Church.

The recent General Assembly elected a New Moderator Revd. Reirei Kourabi replacing Revd. Rewi Teroroko. With the new name and the new Moderator and the brand new strategic plan there is hope for a better beginning in 2015.



Prayer Requests:

1. The implementation of a 10 year Capacity Development Plan beginning from 2015.
2. Empower the leadership to be able to clear the debts of the now closed church businesses.
3. Empower the members to give with open hearts for the Church Programmes.

Mareweia Riteti
KUC, Kiribati

Sunday, 26 April 2015 (4th Sunday of Easter)

Bible Readings: Psalm 23; Acts 4:5-12; John 10:11-18



The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want;
he makes me lie down in green pastures.
He leads me beside still waters;
he restores my soul.
He leads me in right paths
for his name's sake.
Even though I walk through the
darkest valley,
I fear no evil; for you are with me;
your rod and your staff – they comfort me.
you prepare a table before me
in the presence of my enemies;
you anoint my head with oil,
my cup overflows.
Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me
all the days of my life;
and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord
my whole life long.

Psalm 23 (NRSV)

(Image source: Donielle Boal, Psalm 23, <http://fineartamerica.com/art/paintings/psalm+23/all>)

United Church in Papua New Guinea

Symposium. United Church plans to host a symposium in May 2015 to address some issues and concerns, both doctrinal and theological. This symposium will be the first one for the Church. Issues emerging as the Church grows include: infant baptism, Holy Communion practices, ordination requirements, same-sex marriage, climate change, liturgy, etc.



Church-State Partnership Program. The United Church is one of the seven members of the Church Partnership Program under Australian Government. This program has proven successful in delivery of services to the people through the Church. Thus PNG Government considered it necessary to use the same concept to fund Education and Health Programs and Projects through the Church Development Council (CDC). The CDC is made up of Ministers of Planning and Community Development with all the leaders of the churches including the seven churches under CPP.

Peace Process at the Papuan Gulf Region (PGR). The PGR of United Church in PNG embarked on the Peace Process this year. They plan to invite relatives of late James Chalmers to come and accept the repentance of the people. The Church in Gulf Region believes that unless that peace process is completed the people of Gwaribari will continue to live under that curse. The planned peace celebrations will be in November 2015. The actual time is April 8 however, due to bad weather then it has been moved to November. They expect Moderator and other Church leaders to attend.

Prayer Request:

Pray for the United Church in Papua New Guinea as they are preparing for and implementing the planned programmes for this year.

Uvenama Rova
UCPNG, Papua New Guinea

My prayers and reflections in May 2015...

Sunday, 3 May 2015 (5th Sunday of Easter)

Bible Readings: Psalm 22:25-31; Acts 8:26-40; John 15:1-8

Meditation on John 15:15-10

The relationship of man to God is expressed through a symbolism – vine and the branches. John in his gospel uses similar symbolisms to express the unity of God and man, eg the life giving water (4.13-14), the bread of life (6.35-38), light (8.12), etc. Jesus says “I am the vine and the branches, remain united with me and I will remain united with you”.

There is a similarity between this understanding of union and that of the Vedic teaching of Hinduism – the union of God and man. In the Indian philosophical thought, man ultimately unites with the supreme God. In Vedas, as man unites with God he loses his identity and becomes part of God. But in John we find that man still maintains his identity and individually. Just as vine and branches from one entity, the branches still remain as branches to bear fruit. In order to bear fruit, the life and energy come from the stem.

Only in a perfect union with God we have life and existence. Our existence therefore is a dependent existence. Only God can exist independently. Jesus says: “you can do nothing without me.” If we are in God, we can bear fruit.

Prayer:

Thank you Lord for creating me and allowing me to be in this world. Unite me completely with you so that I may live and bear fruit. Amen.

George Joy
IOC, UK

(Source: CWM, Celebrating out diversity in God)

United Church in Jamaica and the Cayman Islands



In 2015, the UCJCI will effect its 39th Synod (the Synod is the highest decision making body). We will continue to observe our theme of Renewal and Transformation. During the three (3) day period we hope to install a new Moderator and agree on the mission and ministry to be undertaken for the next two (2) years.

We have agreed that the locus of ministry lies within the congregations and having had discussions with our ministers and lay leaders we are contemplating a focus on discipleship for the next period.

- 1) A discipleship, which enables our members and congregations to look inwards as we seek to connect with our Lord, through life-giving worship and lived out dependence on the Word.
- 2) A discipleship which challenges us to continue to look outwards as we seek to become a needs meeting church, responding to those who live on the edge of life, hurting from the internal and external forces which confronts the church in two nations.
- 3) A discipleship which requires us to look upwards to God as our source of strength and purpose as we are inspired to faithfulness.

We continue our work in the areas of Children's and Youth Ministry and building Leadership capacity to ensure missional congregations. We will continue to address issues of justice and equality, environmental issues, faith and integrity.

Prayer Requests:

1. Pray for an effective and productive Synod.
2. Pray for a fresh anointing and the spirit of discernment on the incoming Moderator.
3. Pray for our Church Leaders (Ministers, Administrators, Lay Leaders).
4. Pray for growth in our economies (Jamaica, Cayman).
5. Pray for the health of our people who are infirmed with many illnesses and life threatening diseases and are fearful for the introduction of new and emerging sicknesses.
6. Pray for spiritual growth, that our faith may continue to be grounded in Christ Jesus.

Marsha Nathalee Martin
UCJCI, Jamaica

Sunday, 10 May 2015 (6th Sunday of Easter)

Bible Readings: Psalm 98; Acts 10:44-48; John 15:9-17

Enfolded in God

We pray to God because of his holy body
and precious blood, his blessed Passion,
and his most dear death and wounds.

As the body is clad
in clothes, and the flesh in the skin,
and the bones in the flesh,
and the heart in the whole, so are
we clothed, body and soul,
in the goodness of God and enfolded in it.

Our lover desires that our soul should
cling to him with all its might,
and that we should ever hold fast
to his goodness.

For this above all else
pleases God and strengthens the soul.

He who made man for love, will by that same
love restore him to his former blessedness
—and yet more.

(Source: *Enfolded in Love: Daily Readings with Julian of Norwich*)

Missional Story from William and Elizabeth

Ministry in the new context (Davyton) has been challenging since we relocated from Lowe River. We are rebuilding through practical love in order to draw back persons who broke away from active ministry in the life and work of the church following the resignation of former minister.

The church has now embarked on personal evangelism “each one, bring one” as a means of reaching out to the community. Dinner was organized for men in community to provide a forum for dialogue and encouragement for participation in church life.

We thank God that there is hope as some members have begun to attend Sunday services though not regularly and that the Men’s Fellowship group is steadily growing. We thank God for the leadership which has remained steadfast and focused. We praise God for the speedy progress made on repairs to church house (Manse). We look forward to moving in as soon as possible. This will enable us engage with persons in the community. Lastly, we are grateful for our children that they are getting involved in worship through the children’s choir.



Prayer Requests:

1. Pray for healing in the church amongst hurting members. The church is struggling to rebuild membership due to the break-up which took place two years ago.
2. Pray that community members will once again have confidence in the church and appreciate relevance and place within her environs.

William and Elizabeth Chirwa
UCZ, Zambia to UCJCI

Thursday, 14 May 2015 (Ascension of the Lord)
Bible Readings: Psalm 47; Acts 1:1-11; Luke 24:44-53



“Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into heaven? This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven.”

Acts 1:11 (RSV)

(Image source: <http://www.salfordliturgy.org.uk/ascensionc.htm>)

Sunday, 17 May 2015 (7th Sunday of Easter)

Bible Readings: Psalm 1; Acts 1:15-17, 21-26; John 17:6-19

Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand

The Strategic Directions paper of the Church recognises we are in a time of transition and that we need to ensure our structures and resources support mission wherever it occurs. As a church we also committed to a Bi-cultural commitment to and with Maori and then the challenges of cross cultural and multi-cultural ministry. We see establishing a clear strategy and direction moving forward is critical for the future of the Presbyterian Church.

Our work with children and young people is a vital component of our life together. Congregations with young people are both healthy and energetic centres of faith and discipleship.

Following the earthquake in Christchurch in 2011, the challenge of ensuring our buildings comply with standards and associated with that a review of those buildings to ascertain if they are serving our mission is an on-going challenge.

Among those challenges, the work of PressGo in supporting the growth of the church through fostering a culture change that enables the sharing of resources is supporting new and innovative mission and outreach.

Prayer Request:

Pray for the Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand as the church seek to respond to God's call to make Jesus Christ known.



**Wayne Matheson
PCANZ, New Zealand**



I pray for them. I am not praying for the world, but for those you have given me, for they are yours. All I have is yours, and all you have is mine. And glory has come to me through them. I will remain in the world no longer, but they are still in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, protect them by the power of your name, the name you gave me, so that they may be one as we are one.

John 17: 9-11 (NIV)

(Image source: <http://glory-ekasari.blogspot.sg/2011/08/simple-prayer-jesus-disciple.html>)

Sunday, 24 May 2015 (Day of Pentecost)

Bible Readings: Psalm 104:24-34, 35b; Acts 2:1-21; John 15:26-27; 16:4b-15



“But when the Counselor comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, he will bear witness to me;
And you also are witnesses, because you have been with me from the beginning.”

John 15:26-27 (RSV)

(Image source: <http://www.daughtersofwisdom.org.uk/19-may-pentecost-sunday/>)

PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF WALES



'The calling of the Presbyterian church of Wales is to respond to the gospel of God's love in Christ to live out its discipleship in Worship, Nurture and Mission (WNM)'.

Worship - The church exists to increase awareness of God's presence and to celebrate God's love.

Nurture - The church exists to help people grow and learn as Christians, through mutual support and care.

Mission - The church exists to make disciples of Jesus Christ.

In line with the three headings each Presbytery is asked to prepare a **Strategy plan**. Some Presbyteries had prepared and that helped them shape the future of their churches life. Some Presbyteries are in need of support and encouragement as they don't know how to assess and reassess their situations and to look beyond what are the possibilities in God's mission.

The Ministries department prepared a discussion paper '**Our Ministry**' for the



Presbyteries to study and send in their views from their contexts. What shape of ministry will best serve the Presbyterian church of Wales in the future? That is the question which has guided this discussion documents. It calls on the church to embrace a new understanding of the ministry that will serve its mission in changing times.

Prayer Requests:

1. Pray for our mission workers who devote themselves for The mission programme: equipping the church, equipping leadership.
2. Pray for Lay preacher's course and training course for elders in administering the sacraments.
3. Thanksgiving for Souled Out Cymru a summer conference of young people and young adults including mission and youth workers to encounter God, to worship, to listen and respond to God's word.

Meirion Morris
PCW, UK

Sunday, 31 May 2015 (Trinity Sunday)

Bible Readings: Psalm 29; Isaiah 6:1-8; John 3:1-17



“Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the Kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not marvel that I said to you, ‘You must be born anew.’ The wind blows where it wills, and you hear the sound of it, but you do not know whence it comes or whither it goes; so it is with every one who is born of the spirit. [...]”

John 3:5-8 (RSV)

(Image source: <http://theologybyheart.com/2012/06/02/thoughts-for-trinity-sunday/>)

Church of South India

The CSI has renewed her commitment to protect the life and dignity of the girl child through 'assure my future' campaign. Besides, CSI has launched YaAA (Youth against



Addiction and Abuse) and 'Food For All' campaigns on 7th October 2014 through which CSI has made her stance once again clear that the Church is for both spiritual and social transformation.

CSI is now moving forward to engage in *Marturia, Diakonia and Koinonia* through innovative visions such as **CSI SEVA** (Social Empowerment-a Vision in Action), empowering congregations with **SEEDs** (Socio-economic, Ecological and Ecclesial Development schemes) and **AIKYATHA**-Women's empowerment programmes and towards creating infrastructure for Transformational Empowerment for Missio-Pastoral Leadership Education (**TEMPLE**).

Mission Priorities (2011-2020):

- To capacitate the local congregations through issue based bible studies.
- To learn and respect other living traditions.
- To remain sensitive to all environmental and ecological concerns and ecumenical relations.
- To foster the social agenda of the Church through advocacy and developmental programs.
- To mobilise local resources.

Prayer Requests:

1. Pray for the church and her mission.
2. Pray for the capacity building of the missional congregations.
3. Pray for the witness of the Church through her engagement in the justice, peace and reconciliation initiatives.

K. James Cecil Victor
CSI, India

Sunday, 7 June 2015 (2nd Sunday after Pentecost)

Bible Readings: Psalm 138; 1 Samuel 8:4-11, 16-20; Mark 3:20-35



Credits: block-island.villagesoup.com

Meditation on 1 Samuel 8:4-11, 16-20

The elders of Israel came to Samuel and demanded that he appoints a king to rule over them. Since the time they left Egypt, Israel had been under charismatic leaders (judges) to lead them, generally into battle, culminating in the person of Samuel. A common phrase in Judges is “In those days there was no king in Israel; all the people did what was right in their own eyes” (cf. Judg. 17:6). At this juncture of Israel’s history, the leadership wants a change, they wanted a king to rule over them, “just like everybody else” that is, the Egyptians, the Babylonians and the Assyrians. Moreover, Samuel was old and his children were not walking in the way of the LORD, taking bribes and corrupting justice.

Samuel was devastated and prayed to the LORD about his concerns. And God comforted Samuel stating that they were not rejecting Samuel but in fact, rejecting God as their King. Therefore, they could have their own way. Having a king was not a way to solve Israel’s problems but it is the beginning a new set of problems. The question is why did God authorize such a change?

We are in the Pentecost season, remembering the pouring of the Holy Spirit upon the apostles and followers of Jesus Christ in Jerusalem (cf. Acts 2:1-31). In Peter’s speech, Peter stated that Pentecost is the beginning of a continual outpouring which is available to all believers from that point onwards, to Jews and Gentiles alike. Christians see Pentecost as the birth of the church, the community of followers of Jesus Christ.

**Tan Yak-Hwee
CWM, Singapore**

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Ekalesia Kelisiano Tuvalu



EKT is planning several activities for the year 2015, and depending on the availability of funding, we plan to implement the activities as part of our struggle to realistically realize our call as a Church in Mission, and to move in line with CWM's focal theme "Building Missional Congregations that leads to life affirming communities."

1. Review of the Five year Strategic Plan
2. Retreat for Pastors and Deacons
3. Retreat and training workshop for finance personnel
4. Finalizing and printing of edited version of the Bible in Tuvaluan
5. Revising of the Sunday School curriculum and teachers hand book
6. Re- establishing of our congregation in Nauru
7. Youth Camp
8. Climate Change workshops

These are some of the main activities that EKT will embark on in 2015 and we envisage that the outcome should form a more firm foundation for the Church to work on, and we need the prayers and the support of our brothers and sisters around the world.



Prayer Request:

Pray that the outcome of the Action Plan forms a more firm foundation for the Ekalesia Kelisiano Tuvalu.

Tafue Lusama
EKT, Tuvalu

Sunday, 14 June 2015 (3rd Sunday after Pentecost)

Bible Readings: Psalm 20; 1 Samuel 15:34–16:13; Mark 4:26-34

I am bending my knee

I am bending my knee

In the eye of the Father who created me,

In the eye of the Son who purchased me,

In the eye of the Spirit who cleansed me,

In friendship and affection.

Through Thine own Anointed One, O God,

Bestow upon us fullness in our need,

Love towards God,

The affection of God,

The smile of God,

The wisdom of God,

The grace of God,

The fear of God,

And the will of God

To do on the world of the Three,

As angels and saints

Do in heaven;

Each shade and light

Each day and night,

Each time in kindness,

Give Thou us Thy Spirit.

Carmina Gadelica

(Source: *The Open Gate: Celtic prayers for growing spiritually* by David Adam)

Union of Welsh Independents

From 2014 to 2019, the Union of Welsh Independents (UWI), with the support of CWM, will be focusing on the need for capacity development within its 425 churches.



A recently launched programme is designed to help individuals within churches to develop the necessary skills to lead congregations through the difficult and sometimes painful process of adapting and changing, two strands which are now considered essential in Wales to the survival of many of the churches. By the beginning of the 2020s, through delivering the course throughout the country, it is prayerfully hoped that many more churches within UWI will be better placed to ride the storm of secularism that is currently overwhelming Christian traditions across Western Europe.

Spearheading the programme for the first year are a young man and a church in Cardiff, the capital city of Wales.



Revd Dr Alun Tudur

Gwion Dafydd, who has recently graduated from university, has volunteered to attend an 11 month course on spiritual and practical Christian development while working



Gwion Dafydd

with the minister of Ebeneser Congregational Church, the Revd. Dr. Alun Tudur, on capacity development within the

congregation.

At the same time, a team of ministers, led by the General Secretary, will be developing a course similar to the one attended by Gwion, to be delivered in 2015 to the churches through the medium of the Welsh language.

Prayer Requests:

1. That God will bless Gwion Dafydd as he completes the 'Vocate' (www.vocate.org.uk) which began in September 2014.
2. That Ebeneser Church, Cardiff, is blessed and that its capacity to serve God and proclaim the Gospel is increased.
3. That the UWI and the Welsh Independents' Theological College are enabled to develop a Welsh language course that God will be able to use to build up his people within the churches in Wales.

Geraint Tudur
UWI, UK

Sunday, 21 June 2015 (4th Sunday after Pentecost)

Bible Readings: Psalm 133; 1 Samuel 17:32-49; Mark 4:35-41

Presbyterian Church of Korea:

Peace and Reunification of the Korean Peninsula



Prayer Book: National Healing and
Reconciliation and Peace Reunification

The Presbyterian Church of Korea (PCK) has been carrying out a Special Prayer Movement entitled “National Healing and Reconciliation, and Peaceful Reunification” since 2013, the year of the 60th anniversary of the Armistice of the Korean War. The Prayer Movement will be continued until 2015, the year of the 70th anniversary of National Liberation. This year, the PCK is declaring the ‘Special Prayer Weeks’ from June 22nd to August 15th as a part of the Prayer Movement and has asked her member churches to join in this prayer for 55 days.

The PCK is also planning to hold Ecumenical Peace Forum in North-East Asia coming August, 2015 in commemoration of the 70th anniversary of National Liberation. Representatives from relevant churches such as, in China, Japan, Taiwan, USA and Germany to deal with main issues and agendas on peace of the Korean Peninsula according to the decision made in the WCC Busan Assembly in 2013.

Prayer Requests:

1. Pray for peace and reunification of the Korean Peninsula.
2. Pray for Ecumenical Peace Forum in North-East Asia which will be held in coming August.

Hong Jung Lee
PCK, Korea

David had no armor, no experience, no equipment, he was not battle tested, nor was he trained. But one thing he had that Goliath also had was confidence but the huge difference was his confidence was in His God and not in his own strength.

“Your servant has killed both lions and bears; and this uncircumcised Philistine shall be like one of them, seeing he has defied the armies of the living God. The LORD who delivered me from the paw of the lion and from the paw of the bear, will deliver me from the hand of this Philistine.”

1Samuel 17:36-37a (RSV)

(Image source: <http://www.patheos.com/blogs/christiancrier/2014/04/15/david-and-goliath-bible-story-lesson-summary-and-study/>)

Sunday, 28 June 2015 (5th Sunday after Pentecost)

Bible Readings: Psalm 130; 2 Samuel 1:1, 17-27; Mark 5:21-43



“And there was a woman who had had a flow of blood for twelve years, and who had suffered much under physicians, and had spent all that she had, and was no better but rather grew worse. She had heard the reports about Jesus, and came up behind him in the crowd and touched his garment. For she said, *‘If I touch even his garments, I shall be made well.’*”

Mark 5:25-28 (RSV)

(Image source: <http://www.grace2help.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/11/377692.jpg>)

Missional Story from Pat

I am based in Church of Bangladesh (CoB) central office Dhaka and although as a Community Health Advisor I have also taken on several other roles. As well as being involved in planning the community health programme I am now the link person for gender and women's projects throughout CBSDP (Church of Bangladesh Social Development Programme). This involves visiting many projects all over the country meeting project management and staff, local women, trying to implement new women's programmes and guiding existing ones. I also continue to write project proposals, reports, and articles for magazines and edit whatever is needed by the various departments.



At the weekend on my days off I visit a friend's NGO monthly where I carry out a clinic for her staff and their children, I take a children's choir every week during term time at a Christian international school and visit several slum areas to see people who are unwell or need help (mostly in the evenings).

Prayer Requests:

1. Pray for Pat's safety as she travels throughout the country especially when she drives in the rural areas.
2. Pray for forthcoming health and women's programmes and her future in Bangladesh.
3. Pray for all the work carried out by CBSDP (Church of Bangladesh Social Development Programme), CoB education department and church parishes throughout the country with the vulnerable and marginalised adults and children.

Pat Jamison
Ecumenical Partner, UK to CoB

My prayers and reflections in July 2015...

Sunday, 5 July 2015 (6th Sunday after Pentecost)

Bible Readings: Psalm 48; 2 Samuel 5:1-5, 9-10; Mark 6:1-13

Meditation on II Samuel 5:1-5, 9-10

David is King. The promise in his anointing, so many years before, is fulfilled. Now he has the confidence of the people, and he has conquered a city for himself, 'David's City'. The selected verses of our reading tell this simple story - but they are surrounded by something far more complex.

In the Hebrew Scriptures, there are nearly always at least two stories running alongside each other. In one, as here, David is the superstar king, conqueror and hero. But in the background is the story of David the manipulator, and in the future lies the murderer, adulterer, despot.

David's City, of course, is Jerusalem, which stands even today as a powerful symbol of the hopes and hatreds of three major religions, a focus for violence and conflict.

And yet, the Hebrew prophets find in David and his city, a pointer to a different pattern for humanity; where justice and peace replace oppression and war; where the nations can find healing instead of destruction.

The prophets hold out a challenge. Neither the superstar hero nor the vicious despot has the last word. The challenge is to build communities of justice, peace and healing, in the name of the Son of David, the Prince of Peace.

**Janet Wootton
CF, UK**



Great is the LORD and greatly
 to be praised in the city of our God!
 His holy mountain, beautiful in elevation,
 is the joy of all the earth,
 Mount Zion, in the far north,
 the city of the great King.
 Within her citadels God
 has shown himself a sure defense. [...]

We have thought on thy steadfast
 love, O God,
 in the midst of thy temple.
 As thy name, O God,
 so thy praise reaches to the ends of
 the earth.
 Thy right hand is filled with victory;
 let Mount Zion be glad!
 Let the daughters of Judah rejoice
 because of thy judgements!

Psalm 48:1-3; 9-11 (RSV)

(Image source: <http://riseuptimes.org/>)

Sunday, 12 July 2015 (7th Sunday after Pentecost)

Bible Readings: Psalm 24; 2 Samuel 6:1-5, 12b-19; Mark 6:14-29

“The earth is the Lord’s and everything in it, the world and
all who live in it” (Ps 24:1)

WHY CAN’T WE SHARE?

Stars in the sky
Big and small in sizes
Share the same sky

Creatures of the sea
Different in their kinds
Share the same sea

With their difference
Stars and creatures in earth
Share the same things

So why can’t we?
People of His earth
Share God, our Creator

Prayer: God of all creation, you are our heavenly parent. Enable each of us
humankind to see and serve one another as brother and sister. Amen.

Kagiso Malar Samuel

(Source: *Poems of Peace* by D. Kagiso Malar Samuel)

Congregational Federation



The Congregational Federation is a voluntary association of over 250 independent churches throughout England, Wales and Scotland. The Federation is divided into 10 areas within the United Kingdom, two of which are nation states themselves i.e. the Congregational Federation in Wales and in Scotland. Areas organise themselves differently but they are a means of support, encouragement and enabling to the local churches that make up the Area Associations.



The Congregational Federation affirms the “scriptural right of every separate Church to maintain perfect independence in the government and administration of its own particular affairs.” This independence means that we join together in areas of common concern to pool our resources, skills and enthusiasm as we co-operate

together in the service of the kingdom of God.

At a meeting of the Federation Mission and Society Committee a discussion was begun on the relationship between church and society, based around Luke chapter 5: 4-5;

'When Jesus had finished speaking, he told Simon, "Row the boat out into the deep water and let your nets down to catch some fish."

"Master," Simon answered, "we have worked hard all night long and have not caught a thing. But if you tell me to, I will let the nets down."

One of the key questions was: Do our churches cast out nets, or are we still fishing with a rod and bait? This is something for all churches worldwide to consider and to pray about.

Prayer Requests:

1. Pray for all churches everywhere who seek new ways to engage with their local communities.
2. Pray that our churches will work to become more inclusive, in order that the Gospel message is available to all who want to hear.
3. Pray that our hearts and minds will be open to God's word, so that all we do is for His glory.

Judith Mbaabu
CF, UK

Sunday, 19 July 2015 (8th Sunday after Pentecost)

Bible Readings: Psalm 89:20-37; 2 Samuel 7:1-14a; Mark 6:30-34, 53-56



Now many saw them going, and knew them, and they ran there on foot from all the towns, and got there ahead of them. As he went ashore he saw a great throng, and he had compassion on them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd; and he began to teach them many things.

Mark 6:33-34 (RSV)

(Image source: <http://shouttothelordcanada.com/JesusHealer.html>)

Church of Jesus Christ in Madagascar (FJKM)



We are thankful to God that the Church grows as the FJKM has now about 6 million members throughout the island. The year 2015 is the beginning of new term of office for elders and deacons in all congregations. All departments are having their General Assembly meetings to discuss and set up their programs and policy for the next four years. Pastors and their spouses are holding their workshops/trainings. The new FJKM Reformed University is developing its Departments.

Madagascar is still recovering from the endless political crisis that has led the country to deep poverty and a culture of violence. 90% of Malagasy citizen



live with or under 2\$ per day. Human rights violations and in justice are everywhere. To address this situation of chaos the FJKM like sheep among wolves works for the Kingdom through two Departments of Women and Development. People are trained and given tools. They are supported in many ways

that they may fully live their lives. We try to alleviate poverty by helping people to fish rather than just eat, and to care for the environment.

The FJKM along with the Christian Council (FFKM) is working hard toward the Reconciliation Process as there is no Peace without Reconciliation.

Prayer Request:

Pray for the FJKM as they work for transforming the nation and the Kingdom of God.

**Lala Haja Rasendrasasina
FJKM, Madagascar**

Sundays with CWM 2015 75

Sunday, 26 July 2015 (9th Sunday after Pentecost)

Bible Readings: Psalm 14; 2 Samuel 11:1-15; John 6:1-21



Jesus said to them, “I am the bread of life”

John 6:35

(Image source: http://sl-ray.ru/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/rafah-child-eating-bread_003.jpg)



PCS continues to serve, lead and unite our church members to scale greater heights to serve our community well and to bear witness to our Lord.
We thank God that;

- A) All the member churches have been successfully registered with the government as legal entities with Charity Status.
- B) As required by the government, all organisations are required to uphold Personal Data Protection Act (PDPA). We did the ground work and generated a standard format for our member churches' adoption.
- C) We have conducted extensive and exhaustive work to best identify the ownership of the title deeds and have briefed those who are affected with what need to be done.
- D) We shared the importance of the Presbyterian Care Singapore Network and have received good response and support from our member churches.
- E) We started the Asian Institute of Calvin Studies and have since conducted trainings for the preachers, church leaders and youths.
- F) We have appointed Revd Tan Cheng Huat as the General Secretary effective January 2015.

Prayer Requests:

1. Pray that all member churches will continue to treasure our heritage and work well together.
2. Pray that the new General Secretary, Revd Tan Cheng Huat will lead the Synod staff to effectively provide secretariat support for the Synod Exco.
3. Pray that all the land title deeds will be sorted out and each member church will reflect the land in their book now that all have been separately registered.
4. Pray for better synergy and collaboration within the PCS network.
5. Pray that more preachers, church leaders and youths will be trained for effective ministry.

Wong Pock Yeen
PCS, Singapore

Sunday, 2 August 2015 (10th Sunday after Pentecost)

Bible Readings: Psalm 51:1-12; 2 Samuel 11:26–12:13a ; John 6:24-35



Create in me a clean heart, O God,
and put a new and right spirit
within me.

Cast me not away from thy presence,
and take not thy holy Spirit from me.
Restore to me the joy of thy salvation,
and uphold me with a willing spirit.

Psalm 51:10-12 (RSV)

(Credits: thelovelyscribe.com)

Meditation on Psalm 51:1-12

The traditional setting behind this psalm is the account in 2 Samuel 11 and 12. It is a story of adultery, intrigue and murder. David committed with Bathsheba, the wife of his military chief, Uriah. In order to cover up his wrongdoing, he sent Uriah into the frontline of battle where he was killed. Then, he took Bathsheba as his wife. In due time, they had a child who died shortly after he was born. David thought nothing of his crime until the prophet Nathan accused him by means of a parable whereby David convicted himself of the crime. In tears, David confessed his sin.

The language in Psalm is so universal and so it speaks to all of us. The psalm is filled with the vocabulary of guilt. Words such as “transgressions,” “sin” and “iniquity” envelope the whole psalm (cf. 51:1-3). David was filled with remorse as seen in his plea for God’s mercy and forgiveness, and for the cleansing of his sins. David acknowledged that he has done something wrong and that was the first step of finding forgiveness. David did not attempt to give excuses to God for the wrongs he did but rather that he accepted the consequences of his sin. David ended the psalm, asking God for renewal and re-creation. To be forgiven also meant putting away the old nature and to put on the new. This reminded us of Paul’s words to the Corinthians, “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old things have passed away. Behold, all things have become new.” (2 Cor. 5:17).

For Christians, the cross of Jesus Christ is God’s forgiveness and restoration between the broken relationship between humankind and God. Through the cross, God has shown God’s love and reconciliation and on the part of the human being is to come to God with a broken and contrite heart which God will not despise.

Tan Yak-Hwee
CWM, Singapore

Sunday, 9 August 2015 (11th Sunday after Pentecost)

Bible Readings: Psalm 130; 2 Samuel 18:5-9, 15, 31-33; John 6:35, 41-51

Poem

"Is it so far from thee
Thou canst no longer see
In the chamber over the gate
That old man desolate,
Weeping and wailing sore
For his son who is no more?
'O Absalom, my son!'

"Somewhere at every hour
The watchman on the tower
Looks forth, and sees the fleet
Approach of hurrying feet
Of messengers, that bear
The tidings of despair.
'O Absalom, my son!'

"That 'tis a common grief
Bringeth but slight relief;
Ours is the bitterest loss.
Ours is the heaviest cross;
And forever the cry will be,
Would God I had died for thee,
O Absalom, my son!'"

B. Dale

(Source: http://biblehub.com/sermons/auth/dale/david's_lament_over_absalom.htm)

Protestant Church in the Netherlands



For any church in the world it is important to get young people involved. This is perhaps even more important in protestant churches in the secularized context of Western Europe, where 83% of young Dutch people are not member of any church.

Within the Protestant Church of the Netherlands there are two main organizations focusing on young people, reflecting the diversity of our united church; the HGJB and JOP. Both organizations have professional and



volunteer workers employed for a multitude of tasks: the development of youth material and lectures, organization of activities, camps, workshops and Christian holidays, and most importantly the work in local congregations through local youth workers.

(Image source: <http://www.hgjb.nl/>)

The importance of these organizations lies in their close connection to daily youth life in society. The youth work of the Protestant Church in the Netherlands tries to adapt to the context of the young people, whilst at the same time approaching them not only as individuals but as members of the Christian community, and as people with a potential relationship with God.

Prayer Requests:

1. Pray for the youth work of the PKN which is vital to the future of our large but declining and greying church.
2. Pray that the work of these organizations may reach young people where they are in their lives and is meaningful for them.

Douwe Harry De Roest
PCN, The Netherlands

Sunday, 16 August 2015 (12th Sunday after Pentecost)

Bible Readings: Psalm 111; 1 Kings 2:10-12; 3:3-14; John 6:51-58



Great are the works of the LORD,
studied by all who have pleasure in them.
Full of honor and majesty is his work,
and his righteousness endures for ever.
He has caused his wonderful works
to be remembered;
the LORD is gracious and merciful.

Psalm 111:2-4 (RSV)

(Image source: <http://adfinesterrae.com/2012/03/14/psalm-111/>)

Churches of Christ in Malawi



CCM cherishes the idea of Partnership in Mission. For this reason Revd. Nixon Chiwala has been working with the United Congregational Church of Southern Africa (UCCSA) Botswana Synod. This time CCM is privileged to have two mission enablers. Pravanjan Jena is from the Church of North India. He came to Malawi in October 2013. He is working with CCM in the area of finance to help CCM put up systems and accounting policies to promote transparency and accountability. We have Fiskani Agbermodji who also came in to help



CCM in the area of development. CCM's main concern is capacity building – both finance and human resource. Gowa house as the only means of income to run the church is not enough. Also need for the church to change the mind-set of the members and its theology on giving.

Prayer Requests:

1. Pray for smooth implementation of MSP 2 to graduate to MSP 3 and 4.
2. Pray for the new leadership to continue implementing the programs of the church for the benefit of the members.
3. Pray for the unity of the church.
4. Pray for development and usage of the new strategic plan which is near to its completion.
5. Pray for development of more sources of income to reduce overdependence on Gowa House.
6. Pray for development and identification of skills within CCM to promote capacity of the church.
7. Pray for membership of the church to change its mind-set to now think of self-reliance and independence of the church economically and socially.

Patrick W. Mputi
CCM, Malawi

Sunday, 23 August 2015 (13th Sunday after Pentecost)

Bible Readings: Psalm 84; 1 Kings 8:22-30, 41-43; John 6:56-69



How lovely is thy dwelling place,
O LORD of hosts!

My soul longs, yea, faints
for the courts of the LORD;
my heart and flesh sing for joy
to the living God.

Even the sparrow finds a home,
and the swallow a nest for herself,
where she may lay her young,
at thy altars, O LORD of hosts,
my King and my God.

Blessed are those who dwell in thy house,
ever singing thy praise! *Selah*

Psalm 84:1-4(RSV)

(Image source: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/kvjkrkr/>)

Team visit

My mission journey to United Church of Zambia (UCZ) in May 2014 from the United Reformed Church (URC) in the United Kingdom (UK) was a fruitful one, rooted in story-telling, listening, travelling and dialogue. We exchanged ideas with our hosts on maintaining effective projects, and possibilities for transforming less effective ones. Extending welcome to our youth topped discussions as UCZ appears to be doing this well. On the first Sunday I welcomed an opportunity to preach. My sermon focused on the Emmaus journey which, broadly, is about



grasping opportunities to see. It is about the identity of Christ – our tree of life – and recognising God’s presence with us in the face of our own vulnerabilities. In a largely conservative society, such as Zambia, conversations about human sexuality were generally less comfortable and challenging. On one of our journeys, I encountered an ancient tree which had a compelling history. At this tree, ancestors were sold, alongside cattle and other livestock, into slavery. As an African-Caribbean woman living in the UK visiting Zambia for the first time, I was suddenly face to face with part of my history which is an important part of the future telling of my story.

Prayer Requests:

1. For the successful conduct of the next round of team visits.
2. That the participants will find the team visit an encouraging and learning experience to strengthen their ministry.

Tessa Henry-Robinson
URC, UK

Sunday, 30 August 2015 (14th Sunday after Pentecost)

Bible Readings: Psalm 45:1-2, 6-9; Song of Solomon 2:8-13; Mark 7:1-8, 14-15, 21-23



And the Pharisees and the scribes asked him, “Why do your disciples not live according to the tradition of the elders, but eat with hands defiled?” And he said to them, “Well did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written,

‘This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me; in vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines the precepts of men.’

You leave the commandment of God, and hold fast the tradition of men.”

Mark 7:5-8 (RSV)

(Image source: <http://www.samgeorgisministries.org/>)

Hong Kong Council of the Church of Christ in China



HKCCCC has approved the following theme for 2015-2016 as “Fullness of Life in Christ for All Creation.” This theme will be carried out through theological nurturing, strategic planning and advocacy and action. For theological nurturing, HKCCCC will foster a holistic understanding of God’s plan towards His creation in all local churches in that, 1) God is the creator, redeemer and sustainer who loves all creatures 2) God’s saving grace brings fullness to all, individually and corporately, in spirit and in body and 3) the holistic approach of mission is proclaiming the gospel, nurturing and baptizing disciples, giving loving service to the needy, exercising justice and transformation in the society and protecting the integrity of God’s creation. Through words and deeds the strategic planning



section will encourage all Christians to witness God’s love throughout the universe by 1) proclaiming the message of love in exercising God’s love by bringing reconciliation to the communities 2) serving the needy, bringing the good news to the those who are marginalized

and sharing the love of God to the underprivileged; and 3) caring for all creation, respecting all creatures, protecting the environment and striving for a sustainable world. For advocacy and action, HKCCCC will encourage all church members to 1) practice a simple and green way of living and to care for the least in society 2) encourage reconciliation within the community and enhance concern for the ecology and 3) share God’s love to all creatures and help the weak and the discriminated ones.

Prayer Request:

Pray for theological nurturing, strategic planning and advocacy and action of the HKCCCC as they will become mediators of “Fullness of life in Christ for All Creation.”

Eric So
HKCCCC, Hong Kong

My prayers and reflections in September 2015...

Sunday, 6 September 2015 (15th Sunday after Pentecost)

Bible Readings: Psalm 125; Proverbs 22:1-2, 8-9, 22-23; Mark 7:24-37

Meditation on Mark 7.24-30

When Jesus sought some privacy near Tyre, a Syro-Phoenician woman searched him out and pressed him to heal her little daughter who was ill. To his words, “First let the children eat all they want, for it is not right to take the children’s bread and toss it to the dogs,” she humbly responded, “Yes, Lord, but even the dogs under the table eat the children’s crumbs.’ Her humble but humorous reply won his help.

A high-caste Hindu (who would not touch leather – dead skin, something that pollutes) once tried to take the Baptist missionary, William Carey, down a peg by asking, “Were you not a shoe-maker?” Carey responded, “Oh, no, I was only a cobbler who mended shoes.”

There is a big difference between the grovelling humility of a Uriah Heep and these humble responses. Humour helps!

Prayer:

Dear Lord, help us to go beyond all that discriminates and humiliates. As we take the good news about you and your love for us, help us not to lose the right sense of humour. Amen

**Barrie Scopes
URC, UK**

(Source: CWM, Celebrating out diversity in God)

When we put these things altogether

When we put these things together

It might remind us how we are changing everyday of our lives

Remember our Lord Jesus Christ say to love one another as you love yourself

What a despair?

What a challenge

What a hope and what faith

When we put these things altogether.

What care and what laughter we
have together

We see our lives unfolding before
our eyes

What a smile, what a joy

When we put these things
altogether.

by Mona Christabel Cowan



Sunday, 13 September 2015 (16th Sunday after Pentecost)

Bible Readings: Psalm 19; Proverbs 1:20-33; Mark 8:27-38

A peace blessing

Living, Loving God,
Creator of Humankind,
Bless each one of us as we go on our way,
individually or together,
with love, unity and purpose.

Loving Christ, Creator of Compassion,
Bless us as we strive to bring compassion
into the search for global peace;
Bless us in our efforts to influence leaders
and politicians.

Refreshing, Dancing Spirit,
Creator of Vitality,
Bless us and encourage us to engage
in lively activity
for peace and justice
in global situations;
to turn disappointments into challenges,
to transform darkness into light,
to root God-given, Christ-like ideals
wherever we and other people walk.

Go in Grace
with Confidence
and know Peace

Amen.

Geoff Duncan

(Source: *Inside Out* Dec 2001: Issue 25)

Missional Story from Liantluangpuii

I am from the Presbyterian Church of India, working in Congregational Christian Church of American Samoa (CCCAS) since February 2007. My contribution to the CCCAS includes teaching Biology, Marine Biology and Chemistry to the sophomore and junior classes in Kanana Fou High School, which is the only high school run by the CCCAS. Besides teaching, I, with my two friends- Rami and Mapuii look after the Christian club.

Last school year we went through the WASC (The Western Association of Schools and Colleges) accreditation, by the grace of God our school is nationally accredited for six years.

After school tutoring is offered to the students for free. Students come to do their homework and we also use the time to practice reading for the students who are in need.



We, the Christian club had a retreat at the end of last school year. We had the time to sing together and share God's word. Some of our members committed their lives to God for the first time and others recommitted their lives to God.



Prayer Requests:

1. Thanksgiving for the school six years accreditation.
2. Pray for the spiritual growth of the Principal, staffs and students of Kanana Fou High school.

Sunday, 20 September 2015 (17th Sunday after Pentecost)

Bible Readings: Psalm 1; Proverbs 31:10-31; Mark 9:30-37



They came to Capernaum. When he was in the house, he asked them, “What were you arguing about on the road?” But they kept quiet because on the way they had argued about who was the greatest. Sitting down, Jesus called the twelve and said, “Anyone who wants to be first must be the very last, and servant of all.” He took a little child whom he placed among them. Taking the child in his arms, he said to them,

“Whoever receives one such child in my name receives not me but him who sent me.”

Mark 9:33-37 (NIV & RSV)

(Image source: Child Labour, http://harmonyfdn.ca/?page_id=861)

United Congregational Church of Southern Africa



The Bongani (“be thankful”) Orphan Care Programme was started in October 1998 as a result of the response by the church to show love and care to the growing numbers of orphans due to the impact of HIV /AIDS within the Zimbabwe population.



The programme started in Bulawayo with approximately 100 children from poor crowded suburbs. The number rose as the programme spread to different areas within Zimbabwe. Currently there are over 5000 children in the programme. Volunteers trained on Home Based Care assist in the running of the programme. This training is based in the African culture of supporting the

family and the saying that it takes a community to raise a child.

The activities of the programme include: Educational Assistance; Psycho Social Support Training; Trainings and Workshops; Skills training and Livelihoods and Income Generating Projects.

Bongani would like to see its children being better. We are working:

- To improve our Early learning Centre
- To reduce vulnerability and dependency syndrome to Caregivers and children through Income Generating projects
- To establish Friends of Bongani
- Have a fund for students who are at University and other Institutions

The organisation will continue in its power to help the children in need; to make our children better citizens; to be the light of the world.

Prayer Requests:

1. Pray for the Children and Caregivers at Bongani Orphan Care Programme in Zimbabwe.
2. Pray for upcoming national elections in Botswana, Mozambique and Namibia.

Alistair Arends
UCCSA, South Africa

Sunday, 27 September 2015 (18th Sunday after Pentecost)

Bible Readings: Psalm 124; Esther 7:1-6, 9-10; 9:20-22; Mark 9:38-50



If it had not been the LORD who was on our side,
let Israel now say –
if it had not been the LORD who was on our side,
when men rose up against us,
then they would have swallowed us up alive,
when their anger was kindled against us;
then the flood would have swept us away,
the torrent would have gone over us;
then over us would have gone the raging waters.

Blessed be the LORD, who has not given us
as prey to their teeth!

We have escaped as a bird
from the snare of the fowlers;
the snare is broken, and we have escaped!

Our help is in the name of the LORD,
who made heaven and earth.

Psalm 124 (RSV)

(Image source: <http://www.lutherplace.org/advent-day-2-expectations>)

Presbyterian Church of Myanmar: Three Main Mission Priorities

Mission Outreach: Mission outreach is aimed at evangelizing animists and non-Christians in different parts of the country. The Assembly Mission Board, local churches, Chin Christian Fellowships and individual donors support missionaries and new converts financially and materially. Recently, General Secretary, Rev. Ring Lian Thang, Moderator, Rev. Vanlalmuana, and Mission



Field in-charge, Rev. Vanlalzara Kalatan visited the damaged region hit by cyclone Giri in 2010 and distributed aids to the victims with the kind support of Gereja Presbyterian Malaysia (GPM). Due to the scarcity of fountain, those remote areas are in need of water supply to get clean and fresh water for drinking and cooking.

Orphanage Ministry: The Church began an orphanage ministry in 1993. It is started with the saving of abandoned babies by our missionaries in the midst of animism. The place those babies and children are being taken care of is Children Development Center in Tahan. It has been running with the help of our partner-churches abroad, local churches, different organizations and individual donors. Currently, the Center is a bosom-home for 54 children.

Healing Ministry: In response to the acute need of people, the Church has been carrying out its Healing Ministry with support from both local people and overseas partners. Recently, a medical team from the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan led by Rev. Dr. Hau-Sheng visited PCM and gave medical treatments to a great number of people at Agape Hospital in Tahan. The Church plans to promote the Healing Ministry through extending the hospital building and inviting more qualified physicians.

Prayer Requests:

1. Pray that the Mission Outreach Programme will be extended in the multi-religious context.
2. Pray for the extension of Agape Hospital project for Healing Ministry.

Ring Lian Thang
PCM, Myanmar

My prayers and reflections in October 2015...

Sunday, 4 October 2015 (19th Sunday after Pentecost)

Bible Readings: Psalm 26; Job 1:1; 2:1-10; Mark 10:2-16

Meditation on Job 1:1; 2:1-10

The first verse in the Prologue of the Book of Job describes Job as a man from the land Uz. Moreover, he was 'blameless and upright; he feared God and shunned evil' (Job 1:1). One would not expect any evil to befall on such a person of perfect integrity and faith. However, with the permission from God, Job was tested by Satan. Job's first test was the loss of his wealth and his children (1:13-19). His response was "Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked I shall depart. The LORD gave and the LORD has taken away; may the name of the LORD be praised (1:21)." Job did not curse God for his loss of wealth and children.

In the second test, he was afflicted by boils and when challenged by his wife to "curse God and die," Job responded with an ambiguous reply, "Shall we accept good from God, and not trouble?" How shall we understand Job's response to suffering in spite of his righteousness?

Some see them as examples of Job's faith and patience but forgetting that Job wrestled with God in despair and anger in the subsequent chapters. Job was languishing in lament and praise. In both lament and praise, Job did not abandon God for he acknowledges that in both circumstances, he was bound up with God's life. He acknowledges that God is God and we are not.



(Credits:
www.stmatthewsepiscope.org
llouisville.org)

Prayer:

***Behold me, my beloved Jesus,
weighed down under the burden of my trials and sufferings,
I cast myself at Your feet,
that You may renew my strength and my courage,
while I rest here in Your Presence.***

(Credits: <http://www.catholic.org/prayers/prayer.php?p=873>)

**Tan Yak-Hwee
CWM, Singapore**

Missional Story from Samoelijaona: Travel

Partners in Mission go for furlough at their home country and for us we will be having ours at the end of this year 2015 in Madagascar.

Going home should not present too much difficulty, but it depends on different factors. For us on Kiritimati Island, we do not access easily to all foreign embassies: either they are in Fiji, a different country from Kiribati; or in Tarawa, the capital city of Kiribati, two time zones away from us. So for us, Parfaite and I need the help of other people to sort out our visa paper works for passing through different countries on our way home.

Sometimes some unpredicted problems happen on the way. For example, in 2013 on our way home to Madagascar we almost lost our hold luggage because we boarded in Brisbane (Australia) and we did not have the proper transit visa to stop over at Johannesburg. As a rule we could not check our things in that airport, we had a connecting flight. We had a shock at Antananarivo airport when we could not find our things on arrival. Only after a few days of follow up we could get them.



Thank God!

Prayer requests:

1. Pray for our home leave will go smoothly in its preparation and during the travels.
2. Pray for God makes people available to help us.
3. Pray for all Partners in Mission who travel.

**Samoelijaona Rasolonjanahary
FJKM, Madagascar to KUC**

Sunday, 11 October 2015 (20th Sunday after Pentecost)

Bible Readings: Psalm 22:1-15; Job 23:1-9, 16-17; Mark 10:17-31



My God, my God, why have
you forsaken me?
Why are you so far from helping
me, from the words of my
groaning?
O my God, I cry by day, but you
do not answer;
and by night, but find no rest.

Psalm 22:1-2 (NRSV)

– In remembrance of girl child infanticide

(Image source: <http://buriedinwater.blogspot.sg/2011/05/teardrop.html>)

United Church in Solomon Islands

The United Church in Solomon Islands (UCSI) was originally a part of the former United Church in Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands (UCPNGSI). UCSI traces its history back



to the Australian Methodist Church which began missionary work in the Solomon Islands in 1902. The Methodists soon became the predominant denomination in that region, and together with the Papua Ekalesia and the Union Church in Port Moresby, formed the United Church in Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands in 1968. In 1996, the General Assembly of the United Church in Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands resolved that the existence of one united church covering two independent countries should no longer be maintained. Thus, the United Church in Solomon Islands came into being as an autonomous church on its own.

The Solomon Islands is one of those countries that has been in the forefront of CWM's conversations, particularly with the challenging issue of climate change and its potentially dislocating and devastating impact on the people, their security and identity. Natural disasters like the recent flooding which claimed lives and left thousands of people in the Solomon Islands homeless only intensify the need for urgent action towards a more long term and sustainable solution.

Prayer Request:

Pray for the United Church in Solomon Islands as they are struggling with climate change and its dislocating and devastating impact.

(Source: <http://www.cwmission.org/cwm-expresses-solidarity-with-the-united-church-in-the-solomon-islands/>)

Sunday, 18 October 2015 (21st Sunday after Pentecost)

Bible Readings: Psalm 104:1-9, 24, 35c; Job 38:1-7; Mark 10:35-45



Are you able to drink the cup that I drink?

Mark 10:38

(Image source: <http://info.alliancenet.org/christward/what-would-jesus-drink#.VBar-6j2OUk>)

Missional Story from Hilda

By the grace of God, I was involved in preaching the Gospel in FJKM churches, such as FJKM Ambonin' Ampamarinanana, FJKM Betafo, FJKM Faravohitra English Club and Andavamamba Malagasy Church and at Aumonerie Protestant Universitaire, Vontovorona (APUV). This chapel caters for the community at Ecole Superior Polytechnique d'Antananarivo (ESPA).



The FJKM Education Department organized a Training of Trainers course on “Education Care” for in-service teachers. The two modules covered included - ‘Biblical World View’ and ‘Corrective and Punitive Discipline’. I was highly involved in this training.

As a Haggai Institute (HI) faculty and alumnus, I was asked to present a topic on “Effective Communication for Evangelism” at a Madagascar Haggai Institute training session. Apart from training others, I was also reminded of my call as a Christian to present the Gospel effectively.

I made two presentations to Dorkasy Women’s groups. The first one was ‘Zambian Foods and Cooking’ to the FJKM Ambavahadimitafo Dorkasy. I prepared a variety of dishes which were tasted by the women. The second presentation was on ‘Women and Dress’, and this was at the FJKM FOIBE Dorkasy Department Quarterly Women’s meeting. Over one thousand women were in attendance at that meeting.

Other aspects I was involved in included supervising and editing mini-theses and research papers for students and friends. I also observed and advised student teachers during their Teaching Practice.

Prayer Requests:

1. God’s wisdom and direction in my work .
2. Good health and strength to be able to accomplish tasks.
3. Our children, Tumbone, Anganile and Ipyana for their studies.

Hilda Asukile
UCZ, Zambia to FJKM

Sunday, 25 October 2015 (22nd Sunday after Pentecost)

Bible Readings: Psalm 34:1-8; Job 42:1-6, 10-17; Mark 10:46-52



Then Job answered the LORD:

“I know that you can do all things,
and that no purpose of yours can be thwarted.
‘Who is this that hides counsel without knowledge?’
Therefore I have uttered what I did not understand,
things too wonderful for me, which I did not know.
‘Hear, and I will speak;
I will question you, and you declare to me.’
I had heard of you by the hearing of the ear,
but now my eye sees you;
therefore I despise myself,
and repent in dust and ashes.”

Job 42:1-6 (RSV)

(Image source: <http://hannahscupboard.com/jobs-prayer.html>)

Missional Story from Sangkhuma

My main emphasis is - To promote the place of Evangelism as an integral part of 'our calling' throughout South Wales.

1. Promoting the priority of Evangelism :
 - a. Having an emphasis on enabling through training, vision days, church weekends and evangelistic events – 25 churches committed to develop lay leadership development including how to lead worship and preaching.
 - b. Encouraging and challenging individuals, local churches and pastorates that they have a story to tell. We have identified those in the congregations with the right attitude and gifts to be able to initiate and deliver local evangelism. They are encouraged and helped to form their own mission and vision statements.
2. Developing pastorates and local church evangelism strategies:
 - a. Worked with 20 pastorless churches to form strategic groups to discern an evangelism strategy within their own location and context. Most churches had never been encouraged to form strategy plan and have no idea, vision and direction. A great joy to work with and to struggle with.
 - b. Equipping those identified churches and working with them in innovation and creative ways to realise their strategy. We will form a core group with different gifts and talents who will be working on the strategy plan for a wider use. I am hopeful that they will come up with new ideas as to how best we could realise our mission strategy.



Hmar Sangkhuma
PCI, India to PCW

Sunday, 1 November 2015 (23rd Sunday after Pentecost)

Bible Readings: Psalm 146; Ruth 1:1-18; Mark 12:28-34

Meditation on Mark 12:28-34

Being Missional or to be sent, is about God's instruction to each one of us when we are called as God's disciples with the words : "*Follow Me*". These words not only intend that we proclaim the Gospel to all people but also that we learn to live as Jesus lived.

God's Mission defines who we are: A sent or missional people of God (our Identity), we honour God, care for each other, provide assistance and bring hope (Activity).

As a called people we are God's representatives in the world so when we as God's people live God's mission - then God becomes visible in and to the world.

The parable of the Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37) helps us understand the attitude that needs to be present with persons sent by God.

1. Compassion: (Luke 10:33)

"...and when he saw him, he was moved with pity". When we live with a attitude of compassion then we notice the suffering and struggles of other and then reach out to them.

2. Care: (Luke 10:34)

Showing compassion can happen from a distance. Caring calls for closer and personal involvement leaving your own comfort zone. When we become involved our compassion becomes visible.

3. Loving Sacrifice: (Luke 10 : 35)

When we believe in Christ, we become members of the household of God. In this household we are all sent. Here we do not ask "*.. who is my neighbor?*" but rather "*to whom can I be a neighbor?*"

Alistair Arends
UCCSA, South Africa



And one of the scribes came up and heard them disputing with one another, and seeing that he answered them, well, asked him, “Which commandment is the first of all?” Jesus answered, “The first is, ‘Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one; and you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.’ The second is this, ‘You shall love your neighbour as yourself.’ There is no other commandment greater than these.”

Mark 12:28-31 (RSV)

(Image source: <http://practicingfamilies.com/2013/07/08/being-a-good-neighbor/>)

Sunday, 8 November 2015 (24th Sunday after Pentecost)

Bible Readings: Psalm 127; Ruth 3:1-5; 4:13-17; Mark 12:38-44

Poem

I give myself to you, Lord,

I give myself to you.

All that I am

All that I have been

All that I hope to be,

I give myself to you, Lord.

I give myself to you,

In joy and in sorrow

In sickness and in health

In success and in failure,

I give myself to you, Lord,

I give myself to you.

In darkness and in light

In trouble and in joy

In time and for eternity,

I give myself to you, Lord,

I give myself to you.

(Source: *The Open Gate: Celtic prayers for growing spiritually* by David Adam)

Nauru Congregational Church

An island so small is in a crucial situation in declining church members to join other denominations.

Prayer Requests:

1. We pray for renewal of thoughts to Review the NCC Constitution for adoption:
 - A common church Vision and Mission statement;
 - Ordination of Women without limitations;
 - Women and Youth 'Rights to Vote' in Council meetings given equal opportunity;
 - Induction of elected Lay preachers, past and present should guarantee a lifetime membership as stewards;
2. We pray for God's peace bestowed upon every member involved in rebuilding Anabar Church and for its unity to ensure spreading of "THE WORD" is endlessly enjoyed by all.
3. We pray for God's inspirational providence to be bestowed upon Church Leaders and Council members for enabling mission.
4. We pray that our Loving God stirs the hopes of every church member in a direction that they may see peace.



**Prayer Book Steering Committee
NCC, Nauru**

Sunday, 15 November 2015 (25th Sunday after Pentecost)

Bible Readings: Psalm 16; 1 Samuel 1:4-20; Mark 13:1-8



“Do you see these Great buildings? There will not be left here one stone upon another, that will not be thrown down.”

“Tell us, when will this be, and what will be the sign when these things are all to be accomplished?”

“Take heed that no one leads you astray. Many will come in my name, saying, ‘I am he!’ and they will lead many astray. And when you hear of wars and rumors of wars, do not be alarmed; this must take place, but the end is not yet. For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom; there will be earthquakes in various places, there will be famines; this is but the beginning of the birth-pangs.”

Mark 13:2-8 (RSV)

(Image source: <https://www.lds.org/manual/print/new-testament-student-manual/introduction-to-matthew/chapter-8?lang=eng>)

Guyana Congregational Union

Churches within the Guyana Congregational Union owned and operated several schools in Guyana.

In 1976, all church schools were handed over and controlled by the Government. The Guyana Congregational Union and other denominations had no control of management or operations of their schools. This has resulted in a decline of church membership as the school system once served as a feeder to our churches. Over the years, with the churches no longer in control there has been a decline in moral values within the school system. It is perceived this change has resulted in failure in our education system. With the need to grapple with the many ills in our society and bring some semblance to our moral values, a number of religious organizations and private persons are being involved in the education system.



Some churches within the Guyana Congregational Union have opened its doors to children in Early Childhood Education as well as nursery Education. The response to the running of these schools has been favourable and there is need for more such schools and even at the primary level.

Prayer Requests:

1. For church or groups of churches to catch the vision of safe education for our children.
2. For teachers to offer services at the church level.
3. For parents to recognise and support the values taught in our schools.

Valeska Austin
GCU, Guyana

Sunday, 22 November 2015 (26th Sunday after Pentecost)

Bible Readings: Psalm 132:1-12; 2 Samuel 23:1-7; John 18:33-37

Now these are the last words of David:

The oracle of David, the son of Jesse,
the oracle of the man who was
raised on high,
the anointed of the God of Jacob,
the sweet psalmist of Israel:

“The Spirit of the Lord speaks by me,
his word is upon my tongue.
The God of Israel has spoken,
the Rock of Israel has said to me:
When one rules justly over men,
ruling in the fear of God,
he dawns on them like the morning
light,
like the sun shining forth upon a
cloudless morning,
like rain that makes grass to
sprout from the earth.
Yea, does not my house stand so with
God?

For he has made with me an
everlasting covenant,
ordered in all things and secure.
For will he not cause to prosper
all my help and my desire?



2 Samuel 23:1-5 (RSV)

(Image source: <http://livingmyfaith.blogspot.sg/2011/08/sweet-psalmist-of-israel.html>)

Congregational Christian Church in American Samoa

To develop a coherent twenty-first century appreciation of theology and contextually applicable ministry for the Church it is important to revisit and understand something of the past. Perhaps here, the *Faavae* (constitution) of the Congregational Christian Church in American Samoa (CCCAS) can be used as it was formulated to be the principles of governance and ministry. *O le Faavae* of the CCCAS declared the church constituted ministerial roles to be as follows:



“We believe that the ministry is the gift of God, through Christ for His Church, given to us for the betterment of life and the service of all humanity. All members of the Church are equally free to approach God, and are called to further the cause of Christ in the World. The glorious redemptive Power of God which was revealed in the Resurrected Christ must be shown in their words and lives...a. The Church represents God to humanity in its testimony and loving service to people; its words and actions are means by which the grace of God is given and the justice of God is brought upon the people.” (*O LE FAABAE, Iloiloga VI-6th Revision 2010, 9.*)

The mission and vision of/for the CCCAS is undoubtedly embraced and pledged within this statement, theoretically and outwardly the ministry of the CCCAS. Since 1980, the CCCAS has been working relentlessly and tirelessly to fulfilled and lived up to the believed statement for the ministry of the CCCAS Church.

Prayer Requests:

1. Forgiveness of our incapacity and feebleness to abuse of authority, harassment and corruption, for the mission of the Church has become self-centered and self-serving.
2. Forgiveness for our failure to fulfil and live by our promises and constituted principles pledged to govern the CCCAS.
3. God to enlighten and animate us with the Holy Spirit, bringing forth resolution so that we may fulfil all that we pledged and promised to accomplish in God’s Name through Jesus Christ.

Ioelu Onesemo
CCCAS, American Samoa
Sundays with CWM 2015 115

Sunday, 29 November 2015 (1st Sunday of Advent)

Bible Readings: Psalm 25:1-10; Jeremiah 33:14-16; Luke 21:25-36



“Behold, the days are coming, says the LORD, when I will fulfil the promise I made to the house of Israel and the house of Judah. In those days and at that time I will cause a righteous Branch to spring forth for David; and he shall execute justice and righteousness in the land. In those days Judah will be saved and Jerusalem will dwell securely. And this is the name by which it will be called: ‘The LORD is our righteousness.’

Jeremiah 33:14-16 (RSV)

(Image source: <http://www.setapartpeople.com/yshua-in-prophecy-part-5-the-branch>)

Congregational Union of New Zealand



The Congregational Union of New Zealand is a small group of 14 churches. Each church is autonomous with Christ as the Head of the church. There is no hierarchy or head office as each church is responsible to run itself under the Lordship of Jesus Christ through His Word and the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

'THIS IS THE CHURCH OF MY DREAMS

A Church adequate for the task
The Church of the warm heart
Of the open mind
Of the adventurous spirit
The Church that cares
That heals hurt lives
That comforts old people
That challenges youth
That knows no divisions of culture or class
No frontiers, geographical or social
The Church that inquires as well as avers
That looks forward as well as backward
The Church of the Master
The Church of the People
The high Church, the broad Church, the low Church - high as the ideals of
Jesus, low as the humblest human
A working Church
A worshipping Church
A Church that interprets the truth in terms of truth
That inspires courage for this life and hope for the life to come
A Church of courage
A Church of all good men
THE CHURCH OF THE LIVING GOD.'

(<http://www.congregational.org.nz/>)

My prayers and reflections in December 2015...

Sunday, 6 December 2015 (2nd Sunday of Advent)

Bible Readings: Luke 1:68-79; Malachi 3:1-4; Philippians 1:3-11



And you, child, will be called the
prophet of the Most High;
for you will go before the Lord to
prepare his ways,
to give knowledge of salvation to
his people
in the forgiveness of their sins,
through the tender mercy of
our God,
when the day shall dawn upon us
from on high
to give light to those who sit in
darkness and in the shadow of death,
to guide our feet into the way of
peace.

Luke 1:76-79 (RSV)

(Credits: www.slideshare.net)

Meditation on Luke 1:68-79

When Zechariah was serving as a priest in the temple in Jerusalem, an angel of the Lord appeared before him with the news that his wife, Elizabeth will bear him a son. And he was terrified even though the angel's first words to him were "Do not be afraid." Zechariah did not expect such wonderful news especially when Elizabeth was advanced in age (Lk. 1:18). Because of his disbelief, Zechariah was unable to speak until he named John (the Baptist). His mouth was opened and his tongue was loosed, and began to praise God, hence, the Zechariah's Song (Lk. 1:68-79; cf. 1:63-65). In his song, he also prophesied the role of John in God's action (Lk. 1:76-79).

According the Gospel of Luke, it is not only Zachariah who experienced fear – the neighbours were overcome with fear when his tongue was finally loosed. Then, there was Mary when she was told that she will be with child (Lk. 1:29-30) and similarly, the shepherds were terrified when the glory of the Lord shone around them at the announcement of the birth of Jesus (Lk. 2:9). Accompanying each 'fear' on the part of the receiver(s), was the good news of hope for the people who were waiting earnestly for the coming of the salvation of the Lord.

The Advent season is a time of expectant waiting and preparation for the coming of Jesus at Christmas. It is time of reflection on the mystery of incarnation when Jesus became Word Incarnate to free humanity from sin. It is also a time to recall that Christians must be ready to meet Him when Jesus will come back again to judge the living and the dead.

So, the question we ask at this Advent season, "what are the fears that we need to let go in order to live a life of expectant hope?"

Tan Yak-Hwee
CWM, Singapore

Sunday, 13 December 2015 (3rd Sunday of Advent)

Bible Readings: Isaiah 12:2-6; Zephaniah 3:14-20; Luke 3:7-18

You will say in that day:

I will give thanks to you, O Lord,
for though you were angry with me,
your anger turned away,
and you comforted me.

Surely God is my salvation;

I will trust, and will not be afraid;
for the LORD GOD is my strength and my might;
he has become my salvation.

With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation.

And you will say in that day:

Give thanks to the Lord,
call upon his name;
make known his deeds among the nations;
proclaim that his name is exalted.

Sing praises to the Lord, for he has done gloriously;
let this be known in all the earth.

Shout aloud and sing for joy, O royal Zion,
for great in your midst is the Holy One of Israel.

Isaiah 12:1-6 (NRSV)

Church of Bangladesh



The Church of Bangladesh (CoB) came into being as the outcome of the separation from Pakistan. The separation initially started as a movement which focused on language and created a free and independent Bangladesh. A relationship with Pakistan was no longer possible. The Synod of the Church of Pakistan on 30th April 1974 declared and endorsed free and independent status of the Church of Bangladesh. This process brings together the Anglican and English Presbyterian Churches under the umbrella of the Church of Bangladesh. Here in retrospective it is worth mentioning the contribution of the devotees and missionaries who gave their labour, lives and endured all the different parts of the country and especially its remotest villages. CoB always remembers those souls with due respect and pays homage to their memory. These people will remain always dear in our hearts and minds for their devoted work, such as giving the light of education and health services alongside pastoral care.

The mission of Church is to manifest and reflect the Good News of Jesus Christ towards achieving freedom and wellbeing of the humanity that would be realized through worship and accomplishment of different welfare activities including social, economic, educational, health and others. The Church believes in and wishes for spiritual enrichment, social justice and self-sustainability those rely and reflected upon revival of moral qualities of all.

One of the challenges, amongst many, is poverty which is deep and widespread, affecting especially the Christian minority. And the Church has its limitations to address the present diverse socio-economic crisis.

Prayer Requests:

1. Pray for the Christian witness of the Church of Bangladesh in the midst of widespread and deep poverty.
2. Pray for the many Bangladesh workers who are working abroad and in the garment factories in Bangladesh that they receive fair treatment from their employers.

Sunday, 20 December 2015 (4th Sunday of Advent)

Bible Readings: Psalm 80:1-7, 17-19; Micah 5:2-5a; Luke 1:39-45



“But you, O Bethlehem Eph’rathah, who are little to be among the clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to be ruler in Israel, whose origin is from of old, from ancient days. Therefore he shall give them up until the time when she who is in travail has brought forth; then the rest of his brethren shall return to the people of Israel. And he shall stand and feed his flock in the strength of the LORD, in the majesty of the name of the LORD his God. And they shall dwell secure, for now he shall be great to the ends of the earth. And this shall be peace...”

Micah 5:2-5a (RSV)

(Image source: <http://enginetime.files.wordpress.com/2012/11/baby-baby-jesus-bethlehem-birth-born-favim-com-151795.jpg>)

Congregational Christian Church of Samoa



The Congregational Christian Church of Samoa traces its beginnings to the arrival in 1830 of missionaries sent by the London Missionary Society, accompanied by missionary teachers from Tahiti and the Cook Islands and a Samoan couple from Tonga. They arrived at a time of fierce warfare and fighting between local chiefs, and the people who were weary of violence and bloodshed readily received the missionary's gospel of peace. When a renowned paramount chief of a much respected family lineage officially accepted the new religion, all his followers and kinsfolk immediately followed suit. Within a few years, virtually the whole of Samoa was converted to Christianity.

A burning zeal for the gospel was engendered within the spirit of the newly converted nation. Huge numbers of people soon offered themselves for overseas mission work. In 1839, the first twelve Samoan left for mission work in Melanesia. Ever since then up to 1975, Samoans have continued to take the gospel message to other Pacific islands, e.g. Papua New Guinea, Vanatu, Kiribati, Tuvalu, Niue, Tokelau, New Caledonia, Solomon Islands, Wallis & Fortuna. Many of these early Samoan missionaries never returned home; they occupy many of the unnamed and unmarked graves in the islands of the Pacific.

The Samoan church during the missionary period engaged itself in the "social redemption of humanity". This vision was based on the church's understanding of God's sovereignty. It saw the divine purpose of redemption not in individual terms only but also in corporate, social and political terms. The newly acquired faith had its focus on the transformation of life and society. That legacy remains a motivating force in the nation's idealism as well as in the church's commitment to active social efforts.

Prayer Requests:

1. Thanksgiving for the missionary endeavour of CCCS in the past and also in the present.
2. Pray that the vision of God's divine redemptive purpose be experienced in all aspects of life and society.

Friday, 25 December 2015 (Christmas Day)

Bible Readings: Psalm 96; Isaiah 9:2-7; Luke 2:1-14



“I started to contemplate the awesome privilege that Mary was given, being able to hold God in her arms, but also keeping in mind that He was still her baby. This cute little child whom she bore was also God in the flesh. And yet, she cuddled and kissed Him, just as all mothers do with their babies. This thought propelled me right into this painting which I wanted to be a very human representation of divinity. My prayer is that the viewer will be struck, as I am, with the amazing way that God chose to send His Son into this world — in pure humility.”

– *Kissing the Face of God*, Morgan Weistling

(Source: <http://www.morganweistling.com/galleries/gallery03/kissingfacegod.html>)

Sunday, 27 December 2015 (1st Sunday after Christmas Day)

Bible Readings: Psalm 148; 1 Samuel 2:18-20, 26; Luke 2:41-52



After three days they found him in the temple, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions; and all who heard him were amazed at his understanding and his answers.

Luke 2:46-47 (RSV)

(Image source: <http://www.catholicbookwriter.com/goldenarrow/catholic/finding-the-child-jesus/>)

Year-End Reflection

The last year 10th of October, Ms. Malala Yousafzai became the youngest (age of 17) winner of the Nobel Peace Prize – grouped in the same pantheon as the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and Mother Teresa, and yet still a student at Edgbaston High School of Girls, where she was summoned out of her chemistry class to hear the news. Ms. Yousafzai began campaigning for girls' education at the age of 11, three years before she was shot by the Taliban. She was so young that some observers questioned how well equipped a child of that age could be to put her own safety on the line and commit to a life of activism. The prize she received on last year validates what she has taken on,



(Image source: customstoday.com.pk)

but also underscores the disproportionate expectations that trail her: Can she truly influence the culture of her home country of Pakistan, which she cannot even visit because of threats to her safety, and where many revile her as a tool of the West? Ms.

Yousafzai may be an Anne Frank-like figure who defied terror, showed extraordinary courage and inspires hope, but how much can one teenager accomplish? But the Nobel Prize took her potentiality seriously for the girls' education as an important tool for the building World peace with hope. It was a very brave choice for life.

Council for World Mission has committed us to develop and to equip young people's potentialities for "Hope, language of life". Sometimes, we succeed to do this with young people but not always. We need to pray to keep walking together with young people and children, because the future of our mission is on them.

Prayer Requests:

1. Pray for young people in and out of churches.
2. Pray for their hope for future World.
3. Pray for the church leaders to always open their arms to the young people.

Kim KyungIn
CWM, Singapore

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