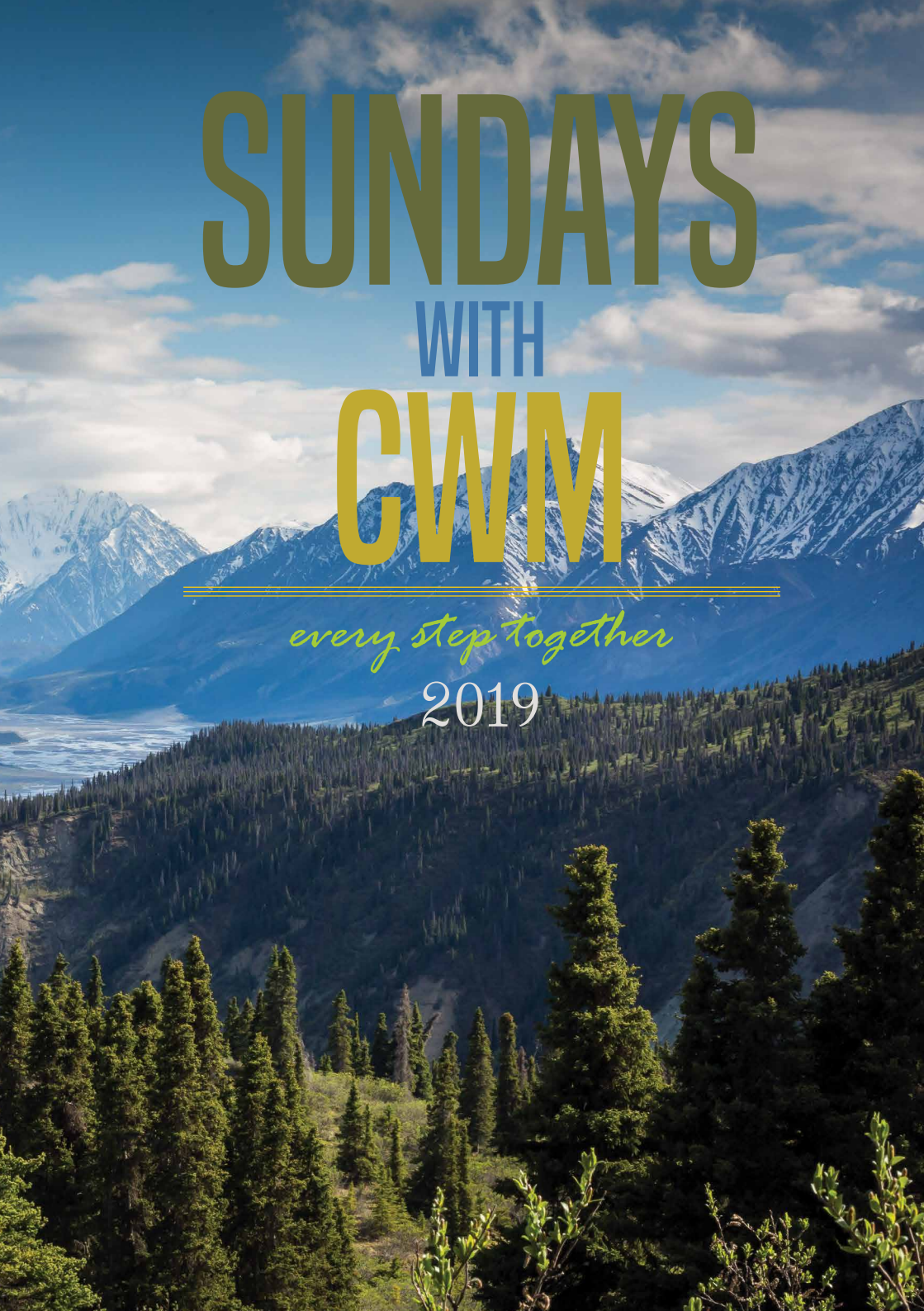




SUNDAYS

WITH

CWM

every step together

2019

Year 2019 Calendar

January

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SUNDAYS WITH CWM

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2019

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Introduction

Dear sisters and brothers, Council for World Mission (CWM) is pleased to once again present us with the weekly bible readings and meditation for our reflection, our enrichment in the faith and our clarity of purpose.

Taking time to read scripture and to draw insights from such readings for daily living is what this devotional is all about. Each of us is a composition of body, mind and soul and each aspect of our being ought to be fed and nourished in order to sustain the rigors of every passing day. Just like the body relies on daily bread for physical sustenance, so the mind and soul must be fed with the “Living Bread” so that we may be spiritually energised for the journey of discipleship.

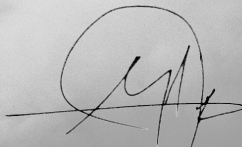
CWM's devotional is a contribution to our daily spiritual enrichment. It contains the personal stories, lived experiences, struggles and triumphs of God's people from across the membership of this great partnership of Churches, who understand what it means to interpret events and accept circumstances through the eyes of faith. These devotionals are meant to connect deeply with our quest for faith in the midst of struggle, our longing for peace in the midst of injustice and our search for hope as the embodiment of life lived with courage in the midst of discontent.

In the temptation narrative (Matthew 4: 1-11), Jesus encountered life's fierce tests of living his conviction with uncompromising courage at a most critical stage of his public ministry. He had just returned from the wilderness of deep spiritual contemplation when confronted with what was meant to either seal his fate as an opportunist who could easily succumb to the pressures of life; or as God's messenger of hope, who could not be bought by the incentives and inducements of a seductive culture of lust for power, popularity and pleasure. Jesus defied the logic of seduction by turning to scripture for insight, inspiration and an indomitable spirit – “It is written: ‘Man shall not live by bread alone...’” (: 4); “It is also written: ‘Do not put the Lord your God to the test’” (: 7); “... For it is written: ‘Worship the Lord your God and serve God only’” (: 10). These are biblical texts and principles that greeted Jesus at the point of his need and gave him impetus to go on.

Like Jesus, we too face our hour of temptation, when everything we stand for is being put to the test – our faith, our convictions, our integrity, our relationships, even our sense of purpose – and in those moments, we need God's Word of comfort and challenge to keep us pressing onwards. It is our hope that, through these devotionals, we will each come face to face with the Living Word, the dynamic encounter with the God of life, who meets us in Scripture and through the experiences of those who, on their faith journey, encountered God as they wrestled with life's struggles and pain through the lens of God's Holy Word, "lamp to our feet and light to our path" (Ps 119: 105). Our prayer is that the stories and experiences of others, willingly shared through these pages, will become a testimony to inspire and encourage us along our faith journey.

I walk the journey of faith mindful that I am surrounded by a "cloud of witnesses" whose relentless struggle and search for meaning has laid the foundation and paved the way for my instruction. I pray that this would become your experience as you read these pages and that you will be blessed beyond measure for the year ahead.

Shalom.



Rev Dr Collin Cowan
General Secretary

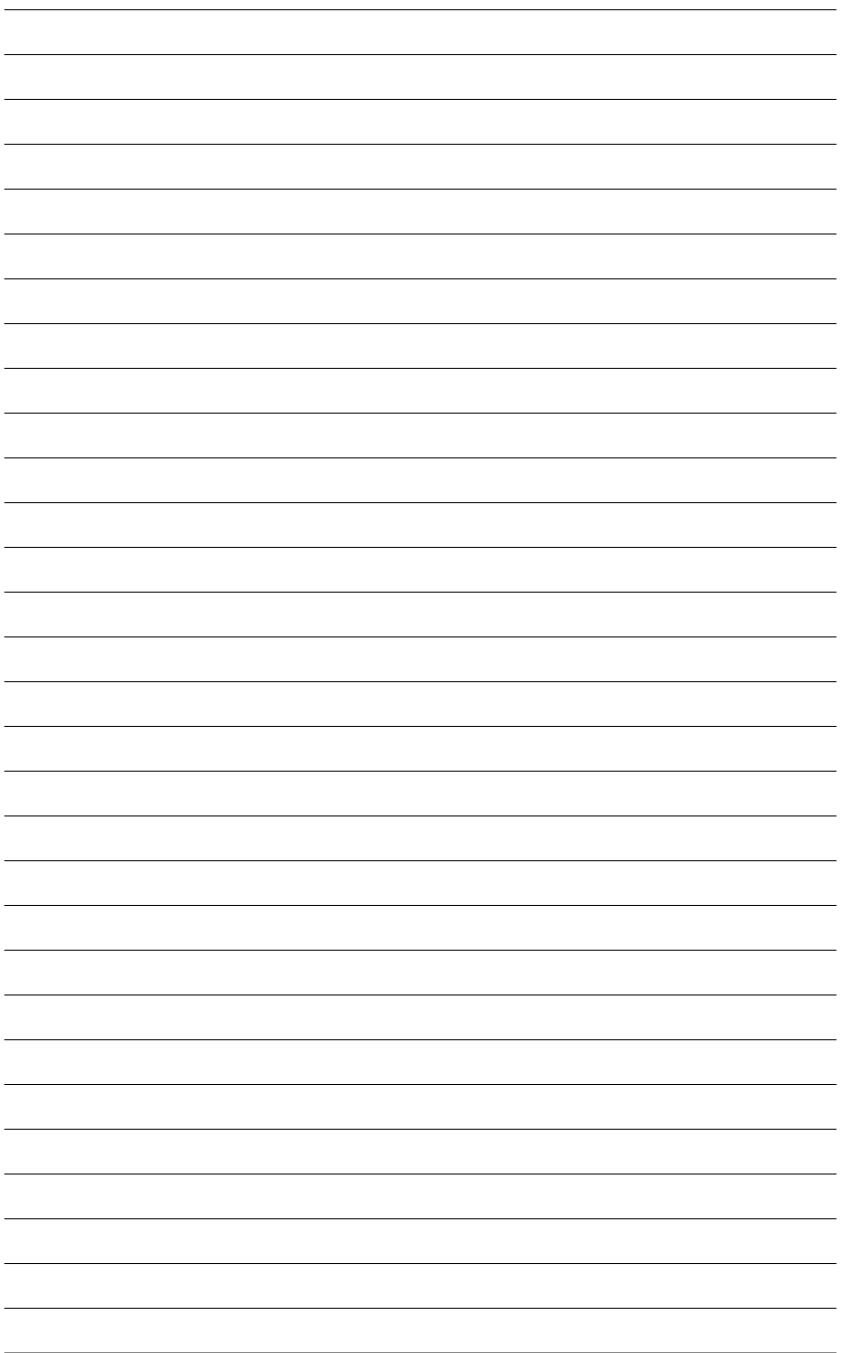
*If you can't fly, then run,
If you can't run, then walk,
If you can't walk, then crawl,
but whatever you do,
you have to keep moving forward.*

- Martin Luther King Jr.



January





Scripture: **Isaiah 60:1-6**; **Ephesians 3:1-12**; **Matthew 2:1-12**

Reflection

Every prophetic oracle is spoken within a historical context. The coming, the irruption of God is fully appreciated when read against the preceding chapters. Chapters 58 and 59 are characterized by gloom, by despair, by a call to repentance. This sets the historical context of Isaiah 60 – the situation which prevailed in the sixth century BCE as exiles from Babylonian returned to Jerusalem. In Jerusalem, a major conflict had arisen between those who remained and those who returned. Living conditions were extremely difficult. Jerusalem was in ruins. The people were now divided again not against some outside threat or enemy but among themselves.

Isaiah 60 opens like a thunderbolt of glory. There is an abrupt shift from doom and gloom to light and glory. Perhaps what is most surprising in this shift is God's response to the people's crooked ways and their sense of despair: they are not to mend their ways first (out of fear); rather God comes, God irrupts, God arises and shines forth in glory! This coming, this shining forth is unconditional. The people's repentance, the mending of ways, the living out of justice is not a preparation for but rather a response to this coming! Isaiah 60 is not an attempt to be made right with God but a thanksgiving for the one who comes, who reveals life and salvation in the midst of the community.

Matthew is obviously aware of the prophecy of Isaiah by narrating the almost folk-like story of the magi. Just as nations and royals would be drawn to the dawning and brightness of God's irruption amongst the people of Jerusalem so the magi – themselves non-Hebrews – are drawn by the coming of the Light. The coming, the irruption of God transcends borders – this is what Epiphany has to teach us. Amen.

Darchonhaia Darnei, CWM Moderator



Uniting Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa

We pray for the Uniting Presbyterian Church of Southern Africa as they engage in conversations with the United Congregational Church of Southern Africa about plans for union between two churches. Also as the UPCSA plan to expand and establish a synod in the Republic of the Congo.

Human Trafficking

Scripture: **Isaiah 43:1-7**; Psalm 29; Acts 8:14-17; Luke 3:15-17, 21-22

Reflection

The words "But now" (Isaiah 43:1) signal a reversal, namely that whatever has gone before is now swept away. So what went before? God "gave up Jacob" (42:24) and poured out judgement on the chosen people. They were forsaken, brutalized, and conquered. God's chosen people became prisoners in foreign lands. The new word "but now" announces an end to God's judgment and proclaims the promise of life from captivity and death. The intimacy between God and God's chosen ones is very clear from the text: Lord who "created you ... formed you ... redeemed you ... you are mine" and so on. God promises to bring them back from every place they were in captivity. Read from the perspective of the Israelites, which is usually the way this text is read, the words of the Lord are filled with such encouragement, grace and hope. Human trafficking and modern day slavery continue to be major issues today, and children, girls and women are amongst the most vulnerable. God's "new word" to the Israelites are perhaps even more applicable today than ever before? However, grace is meaningless and hope is unreal and illusive for the thousands who suffer under the inhumanities and injustices of trafficking and slavery – unless disciples of Jesus today speak and practice the "new word" of God.

However, there is something that is deeply troubling about the text. The freedom and return of the captives is to be carried out by God at the cost of some: "I give Egypt as your ransom, Ethiopia and Seba in exchange for you," (3b, NRVs). Really, God? Unless we have a panoramic vision and an experience of the grace and justice of God demonstrated in/by Jesus we will always tend to be myopic, judgmental, and exclusive in our relationships with others.

Cliff Bird, CWM Mission Secretary, Pacific Region

Prayers

Guyana Congregational Union

We pray for the Guyana Congregational Union:

- As the new executive provide leadership to the Union.
- As the Guyana Congregational Young People's Union elect a new executive committee.
- For young people to consider vocation to pastoral ministry.

Scripture: John: 2: 1- 11

Reflection

Jesus was on a mission to save the world, the greatest mission in history of humankind. Yet He took time to attend a wedding and take part in its festivities. We may be tempted to think we should not take time out from our 'important' work for social occasions. But maybe these social occasions are part of our mission. Jesus valued these wedding festivities because they involved people, and Jesus came to be with the people. Our mission can often be accomplished in joyous times of celebration with others. We have to bring balance to our lives by bringing Jesus into times of pleasure and of work.

Weddings in Jesus' day were week-long festivals and many guests were invited for the wedding parties. It was considered as an insult to refuse an invitation to a wedding. To accommodate many people, careful planning was needed. To run out of wine was more than embarrassing it broke the unwritten laws of hospitality.

The presence of Jesus at Cana of Galilee's wedding changed the embarrassing situation when the wine ran out during the celebrations. Mary knew what her son was capable of doing by informing Him that "they have run out of wine". Jesus tried to ignore her mother by saying, "Mother, why are you involving me, my time has not yet come". Mary trusted Jesus and took advantage of His presence to tell the servants that "whatever He tells you to do, do it".

By His order to fill the jars with water, it turned into sweet wine. This amazed the banquet master and everyone.

The presence of Jesus turns things around. When Jesus acts in your life no one will understand you or how things have changed. We need Jesus' intervention in the different situations we are in. Imagine if Jesus was not present at the wedding, situation would have not changed. What is your own situation? Is it illness, sour relationships, broken homes, misunderstandings in the churches or what? Invite Jesus to be present in your life and your situation will never be the same again.

Nixon C. Chiwala, Partner in Mission from Churches of Christ in Malawi
Serving United Congregational Church of Southern Africa, Botswana synod



Congregational Christian Church in American Samoa

We pray for the Congregational Christian Church in American Samoa:

- For the power of the Holy Spirit to strengthen the principles of love.
- For boldness of heart and courage to work for equality and justice; cooperation, not competition; relational, not individualism.
- For faithfulness in proclaiming the Good News of Christ Jesus in the context of empire and to be faithful disciples.

Scripture: Luke 4:14-21

Reflection

"Insiders and outsiders"; "left-wing and right-wing"; "conservatives and liberals"; "traditional and contemporary", these are just some of the labels that have been used to identify different people and different positions. Some labels are worn proudly whilst some are assigned disparagingly as a term of derogation, a put down even. Such terms often indicate which people are included and who are excluded, who belong and who must be gone. Can we move past labels that exclude and build inclusive communities that welcome all without labels or even despite their labels?

When Jesus went back to Nazareth at the commencement of his public ministry he was an outsider; he did not fit in with the established structures and systems, religious and political. For the duration of his ministry Jesus was on the margins. Yet, he was committed to include others. As indicate in his statement of mission in Luke's gospel, Jesus came "to proclaim good news to the poor...freedom to the captives; recovery of sight to the blind...to set the oppressed free and to proclaim the year of God's favour". Jesus' target groups were representative of people who were excluded; people who did not belong and found themselves on the outside. His mission was to give them a sense of belonging, a sense of inclusion.

Each day we will encounter people who are excluded, ignored or neglected. Many are looking for connection and community. Let us ask for divine grace so that we can be the presence of Christ to them. Let us bring a healing presence and a prophetic witness that works to break down barriers and remove obstacles that stand in the way of creating truly inclusive communities. Remember, Christ has included us and made us into a community, His community.

Anthony Chung, United Church in Jamaica and the Cayman Islands



United Church in Jamaica and the Cayman Islands

We pray for the United Church in Jamaica and the Cayman Islands:

- For the well-being and welfare of the young people of Jamaica and Cayman Islands.
- For God's blessing on the work and ministry of Bethesda Counselling Centre.
- For economic growth and development in Jamaica.

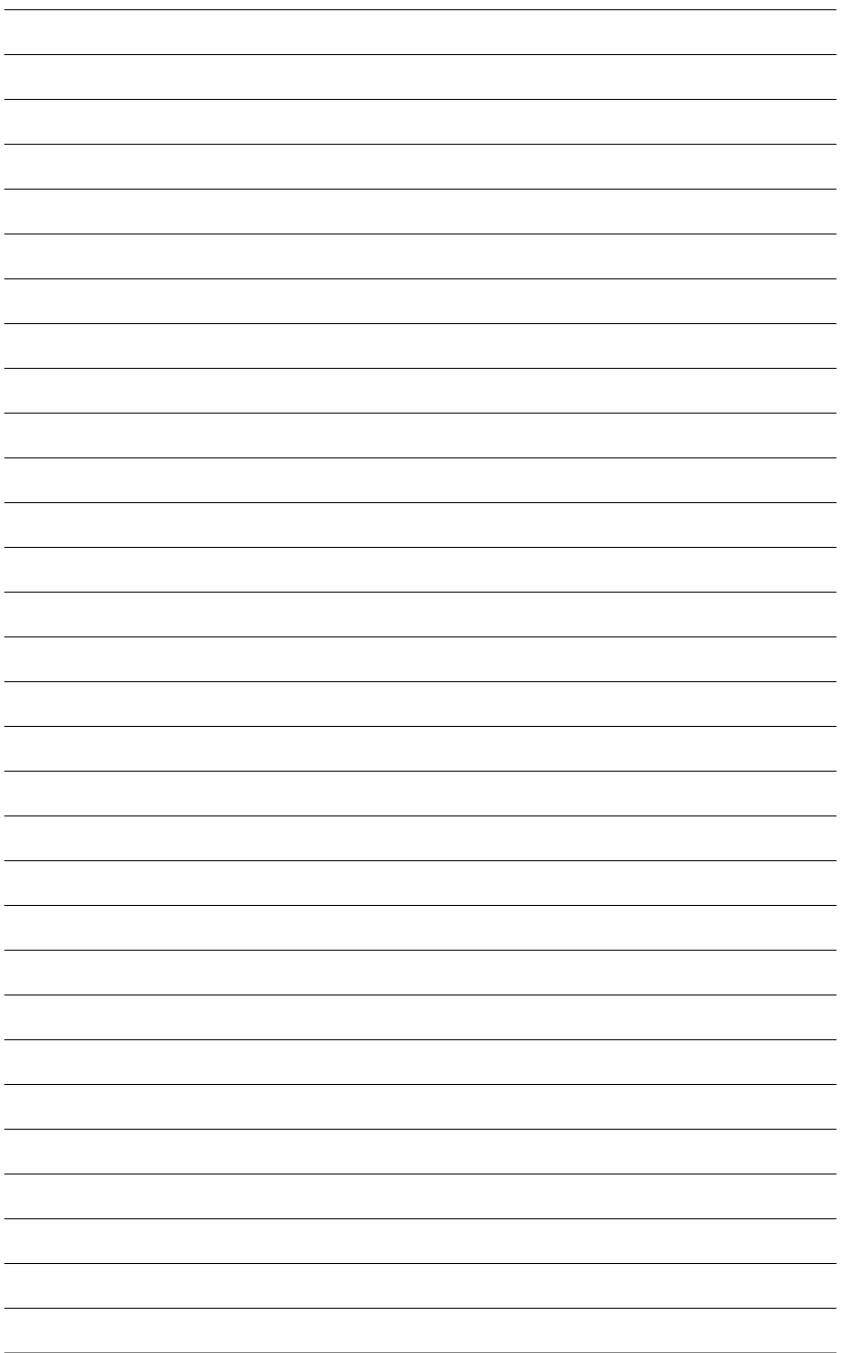


*Do your little bit of
good where you are;
it's those little bit of good put
together that overwhelm the world*

- Desmond Tutu

February





Children & Young People

Scripture: Jeremiah 1:4-10

Reflection

These verses, describing the call of Jeremiah, are both exciting and challenging for the church today.

In many cultures there is the idea of coming of age and until that time the voice of children and young people can go unheard, including within the church. Statements that say “children and young people are the church of tomorrow” encourage us to think their views are irrelevant and unimportant to the work of the church today. Another misconception is that wisdom only comes with age. This adds to our assumption that children and young people have nothing to contribute to discussions about current church life. For many churches children and young people are a missing generation.

Into this description of the church, we hear Jeremiah's call. For our children and young people these verses are an encouragement. In the echoes of Psalm 139 we are reassured that even before our birth, everyone is known to God. Age is not a determining factor in our relationship with God, so why should age be a determining factor in a person's ability to contribute to the life and worship of a church.

We are not told how old Jeremiah was, but he refers to himself as a boy. Yet God called him into service and gave him a message for the people. This is a big challenge for the church. Following in Jeremiah's footsteps, how do we know that God has not given our children and young people a prophetic word for the church today? Simple answer is that we don't. Unless we give children and young people a voice, unless we value the input that they have to offer the life of our worshiping community, unless we actively seek ways to enable and empower our young people then the prophetic voice to our community maybe unheard.

Catherine McFie, A New Face Participant



Congregational Federation

We pray for the Congregational Federation:

- For the unity of the Federation and the creation of a clear vision for the future.
- For the SAGES project (Senior Adults Growing and Exploring Spirituality) and for churches working to become Dementia friendly churches.

Worship & Discipleship

Scripture: Luke 5:1-11

Reflection

Sometimes we reach a breaking point in our lives, our ministries or in our churches when we feel like there is no change no matter how hard we try. There are certain seasons in life that take its toll on us and test our patience. Simon Peter was no stranger to feeling burdened by the minimal results he reaped from a hard night's labour. If we're not careful, the work we do can overwhelm us and make us lose sight of the God-anointed assignment set before us: to cast out our nets to reach people of all nations.

Jesus commanded Simon to push his boat out further into the deep water and to cast out his net for one final catch. Simon Peter responds and tells Jesus that he has been working hard all night and caught absolutely nothing. Simon willingly obeys Jesus and casts out his net. Mysteriously unknown to Simon was that Jesus was going to use his predicament as the foundation for his next miracle.

At times, we may feel worn out especially when we are tested during pressing times. However, our simple obedience to the words that Jesus speak, can be the life-giving water that restores our faith and act as a timely reminder about why we do what we do for God's Reign. Jesus, a carpenter's son, commanded a fisherman to throw out his net. Simon had the humility but most importantly the faith, to simply obey. You might feel like you've hit rock bottom in your walk or your ministry; remember that the particular trial or hardship you are facing in your life right now has value. It is the very stepping stone that will set you up for the next season of life.

Mevia Faletosee, Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand



Board of Directors Meeting

Please pray for the CWM Board of Directors who meet this week that they may know God's wisdom and guidance in their discussions and decisions.

Scriptures: Jeremiah 17:5-10, Psalm 1, 1 Corinthians 15:25-20, Luke 6:17-26

Reflection

Taking time to reflect on the Bible and pray is an important part of growing as a disciple of Jesus. It helps us to deepen our relationship with God, to open ourselves to God's challenge to change, and to consider how we can be partners in God's work in the world. A series of daily devotions has been helping United Reformed Church members in 'Walking the Way – Living the Life of Jesus today': a growing sense of remembering that we are a community of disciples who make disciples.

Reflecting on God's 'Way' and increasing our trust in God share a common image in Psalm 1 and Jeremiah 17. Both refer to a tree planted by water, able to withstand drought and still bear fruit. Rooting ourselves in God's love can help us grow through difficult circumstances in our lives and times of arid uncertainty in our world.

Both the psalmist and Jeremiah contrast the person rooted in God with those who go their own way, and Jesus contrasts blessings and woes, but not according to the conventional wisdom that sees wealth and a good public profile as signs of God's favour. When we consider our inner lives, we might reflect that it is not a simple matter of being in one group or the other, but the contrasts help us to consider where we would prefer to be. Together the readings remind us that it is not only about our inner life, but about the fruit of our faith. How will your time reading, reflecting and praying today be shown in your actions?

Simon Walkling, United Reformed Church



Church of Bangladesh

The church of Bangladesh asks prayers for:

- The ongoing healing and unity of the church.
- Those called to leadership and service in the church.
- National elections which take place in 2019.
- The one million Rohingya people who are living in Bangladesh.

Militarization & Conflict

Scriptures: Psalm 37:1-11, 39-40; Luke 6:27-38

Reflection

"But the humble will inherit the land. And will delight themselves in abundant prosperity." (Ps37:11)

War and conflict have never stopped in our history. Since the Korean War, South Korea has been in a truce with North Korea. But last April 27 in 2018 President Moon held a summit with Leader Kim in Panmunjom. The Declaration of the Panmunjeom was a joint announcement that South and North Korea declaring the end of the war, shifting the armistice to a peace treaty, and actively engaging South Korea, North Korea, the US and China.

David said that the humble will inherit the land. Do not fret because of evildoers. Be not envious toward wrongdoers. They will wither quickly like the grass and fade like green herbs. Cease from anger and forsake wrath. Indeed, those who do evil will be cut off. Here the wicked means those who do not trust God including those who cause conflict with armaments. Militarization creates conflict and interferes with peace. But David told us to trust in the Lord. The people of peace will have posterity. The salvation of the righteous from the Lord who is their strength in times of trouble. The Lord helps them and delivers them from the wicked because they take refuge in God.

God is sovereign. God invites his people to depend on the Lord and not to be swayed by the militarization and conflict of the wicked. Jesus Christ says to love your enemies and bless those who curse you. God wants Christians to love with the love of Jesus Christ's cross in the land. North Koreans are victims of militarism. South Korean Christians should now pray for North Koreans. And we must try to find a peaceful solution and create a peaceful community. May God bless peace on Korea!

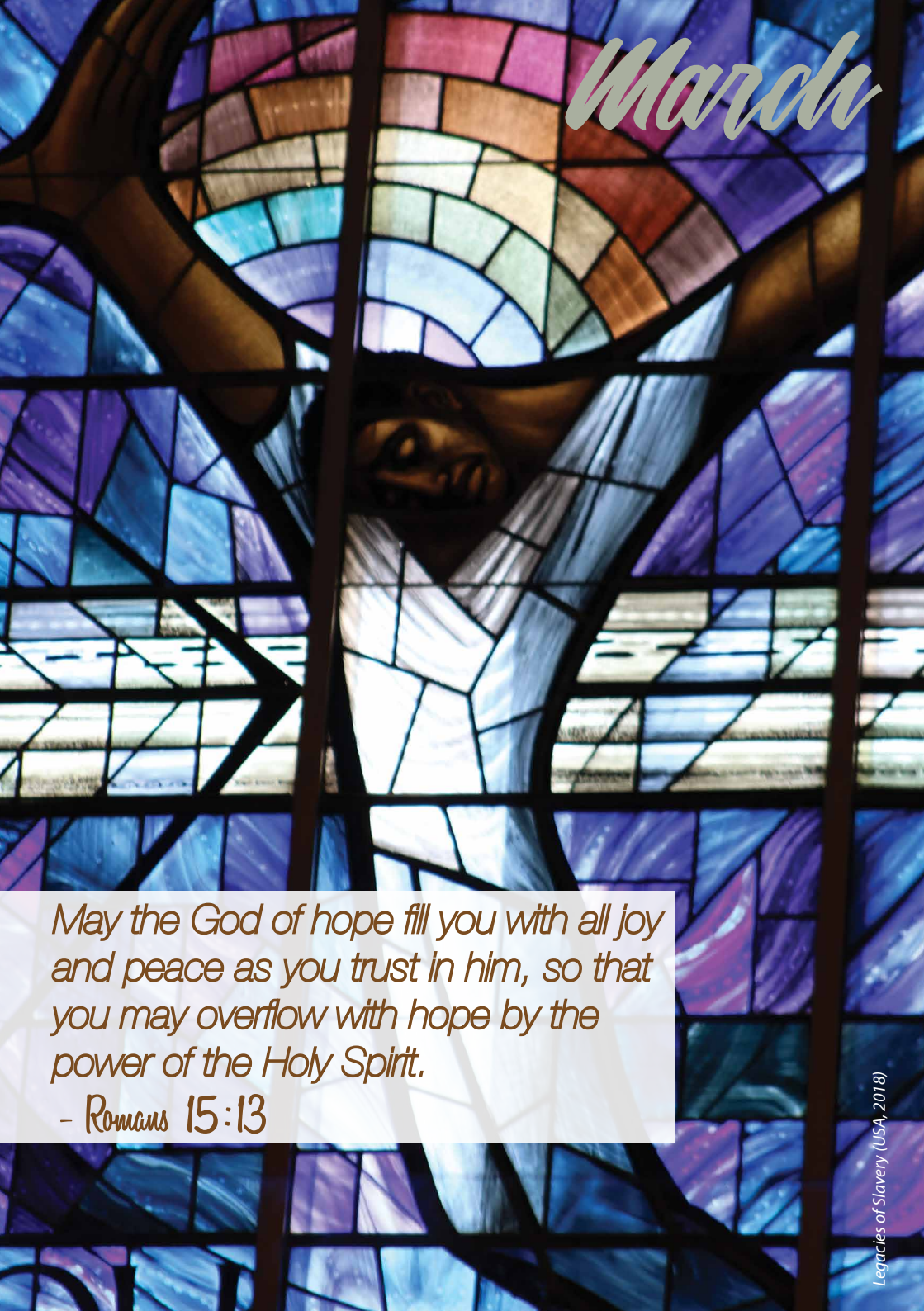
Seonyi Lee, Presbyterian Church in Korea



Gereja Presbyterian Church, Malaysia

We pray for the Gereja Presbyterian Church, Malaysia:

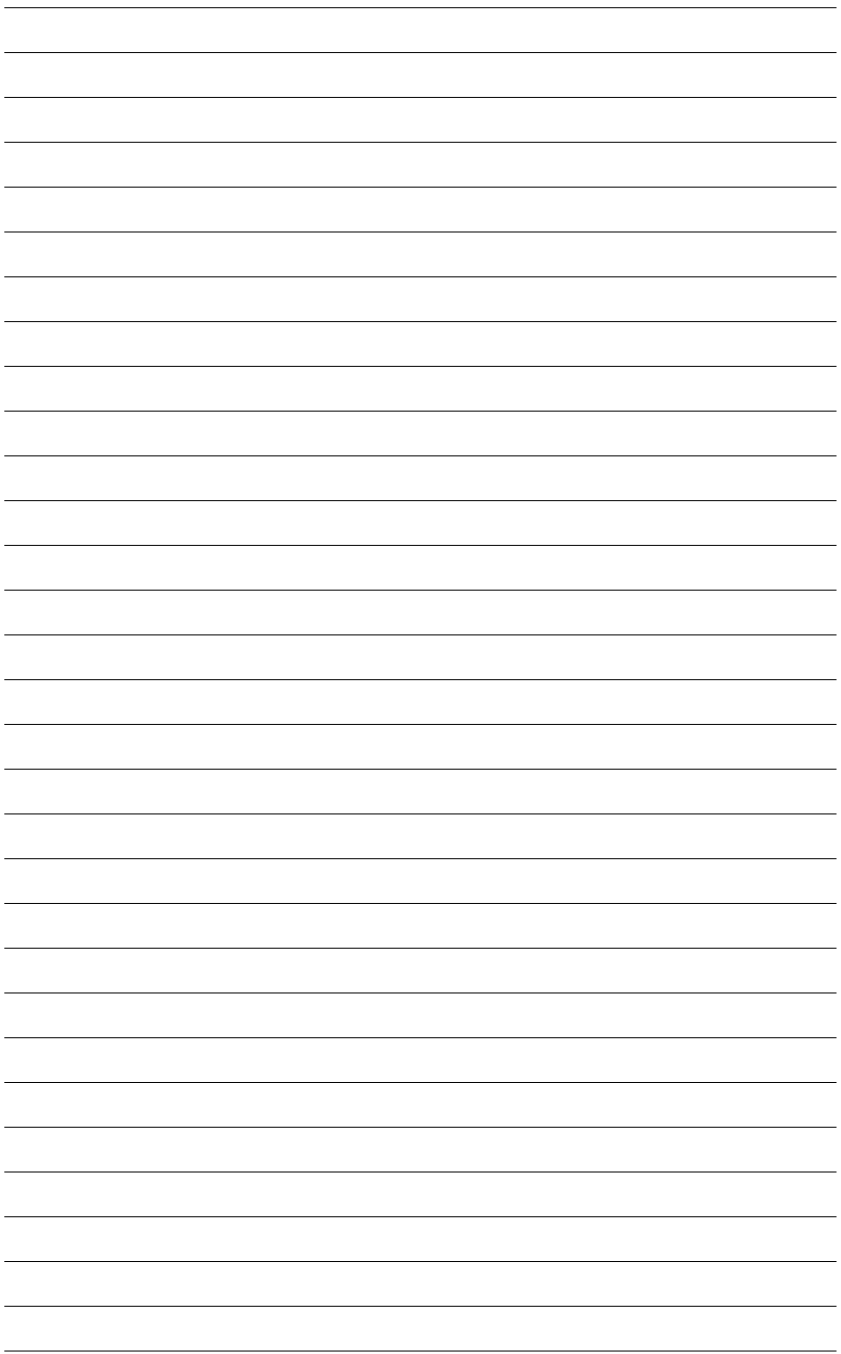
- Remembering congregations participating in Church without Walls, a programme for the renewal and revitalising of the church.
- Remembering young people who are called and trained for leadership within the church.

The background is a vibrant stained glass artwork. It features a central figure, likely Jesus, with a serene expression, wearing a white robe. Above the figure's head is a large, multi-colored rainbow arching across the top of the frame. The entire scene is set against a backdrop of various shades of blue and purple, with geometric patterns and lines characteristic of stained glass design.

March

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

- Romans 15:13



Scripture: Exodus 34:29-35; Corinthians 3:12-4.2; Luke 9:28-36

Reflection

There are times in our lives when the “penny drops” and we see something with a clarity that until then had eluded us. The ability to see clearly and to understand with new insight is a theme that links together the readings for today.

Moses has met with God in a significant way on Mount Sinai that God's glory is reflected in his face which shone with such intensity that he had to wear a veil. Luke re-tells the story of Jesus being transfigured on the mountain and the divine voice that declares “This is my Son,” and so reveals his identity as the Sent One from God. In Exodus, it is Moses who sees God more clearly and in Luke the disciples have new insight into who Jesus is. It is the Corinthians reading that provides a link between Exodus and Luke reminding us of how the Spirit illuminates and inspires us so that the “veil” is removed from our understanding and we see things more clearly. It is the Spirit that helps us to see the reality of who Jesus is for us and the world.

The same Spirit helps us to discern and distinguish between those things in our world which bring fullness of life to people and those things which take life away. CWM has described the context in which we do mission as being a context of “empire,” that is those systems and structures that despoil creation, give millions of people in poverty whilst others enjoy unimaginable wealth, permit patriarchy, conflict and division. We need the Spirit to help us see clearly and to name with conviction the ways in which our world is broken but also the vision of transformation held out in Jesus' vision of a new way of kingdom living.

Are you seeing with clarity?



Wayne Hawkins, CWM Deputy General Secretary, Programme

Deputy General Secretary

Loving God, give us fresh eyes to discern you at work in the world and having discerned join in partnership with you.

Union of Welsh Independents

We pray for the Union of Welsh Independents, particularly

- Remembering Rev Dyfrig Rees in his appointment as new General Secretary.
- Remembering the video based programme mission programme “The Way” designed to build up faith and confidence within churches.
- The UWI's Madagascar Appeal supporting FJKM's work with women, children, medical care and the environment.

Worship & Discipleship

Scripture: Isaiah 58:1-12

Reflection

As we move into the season of Lent it is a good opportunity for us to reflect on how our worship of God and life of discipleship fit together. Whilst our reading from Isaiah focuses on the act of fasting the sentiments shared here can be applied to all of Christian living. We join together across the world in a variety of congregations to worship God, sharing and learning from his Word and the teachings and example of Jesus to then return to our daily lives to live our faith out with the help of the Holy Spirit.

However, the challenge of being church is to enable disciples of Christ to be made and deeper disciples of Christ to emerge. The acid test of this is not when we are gathered in community on a Sunday or involved in church activities but how our discipleship is lived out hour by hour seven days a week.

If we want to make disciples who then move into ever deeper relationship with God our churches need to be places where the imperfect are always welcome, that cultivate an atmosphere that encourages a desire to learn more and are culturally appropriate and about ALL of life which will then allow us as communities and individuals try to accomplish the mission set before us.

Through a closer relationship with God, and living out the teachings and example of Jesus life we can make a difference in the world and times that we live in. Never has the need of God's love, grace, forgiveness and hope been needed more. As we travel through Lent may we seek to remind ourselves to live ever closer in harmony with our God and play our part in, as Isaiah puts it "being a rebuilders of walls and a restorer of homes".

Peter Ball, United Reformed Church



Ash Wednesday

With sorrow we remember how we fail you, our neighbours and creation. And we seek your forgiveness and renewal.

Scriptures: Deuteronomy 26: 1-11

Reflection

Instructions are given to a nomadic community who are about to settle in their own land regarding the appropriate means by which they should honour God, that is the one who heard their cries while subjected to slavery in Egypt and summonsed the appropriate people and means to liberate them and return them to a land promised to their forefathers. When the first fruits are presented to the priest, they are given words to recite: "My father was a wandering Aramean, and he went down to Egypt "remembering the slavery, the oppression, and the liberation. In this way a means is provided for each generation to identify with the history of their people, and to give thanks. In the same way, at the Passover meal, the youngest at the table asks "Why is this day different from every other day?" to which the oldest at the table replies "We were slaves in Egypt ..."

In the Christian context, our Passover meal is at the Communion Table, which for most in our Reformed tradition takes place monthly. At the table we are reminded of a meal that speaks of liberation, and a promised land - a Kingdom of God, in which we are all one humanity in Christ, who has broken down the walls of hostility and made one new people out of those who were previously divided.

We are thus reminded of where we have come from, and of the essential liberty that God wishes for all humanity, who are sons and daughters of God. And so, the sinfulness of the crime of human trafficking is revealed, in which human beings, mainly young women, have become commodities to be bought and sold to the highest bidder, often to be used as sex slaves. Perhaps we need to begin our meals at our tables with the reminder: "We were slaves in Egypt ...".

Ian Booth, United Congregational Church of Southern Africa



Congregational Christian Church in Samoa

We remember the Congregational Christian Church in Samoa:

- In their struggles and engagement with the Samoan government.
- As globalisation impacts on Samoan culture and threatens the livelihoods of small businesses.
- As the country experiences corruption at different levels of government.

Scriptures: Luke 13:31-35

Reflection

King Herod, 'the fox', does not want the death of another prophet on his conscience, so he recruits the help of Pharisees to provide Jesus with a death threat. The Pharisees were ready to co-operate because they wanted Jesus to move on to Judea, where they had more power. A 'fox' is a symbol of a sly, worthless person or someone who is a trickster. They are frequently considered vermin and known for their destructiveness. Later when Jesus meets Herod face to face, he has nothing to say to him. Surely when Jesus has nothing to say we are truly lost.

There are many Herod's in our world who act with slight of hand to manipulate situations to their advantage. Many foxes who are destructive of people's lives and livelihoods; who bring devastation to the environment that surrounds them. These words of Jesus are harsh and brutal, yet the reading also has another more affectionate image.

Perhaps by comparison with Herod the fox, Jesus goes on to speak of his tender care for Jerusalem and the people of God as being like a mother hen. It is no accident that Jesus speaks of 'foxes' and 'hens', one is the predator and the other the prey. Jesus speaks of how he longs to gather the little chicks under his wing like a mother hen, showing his tenderness and care towards those who are weak and vulnerable to the fox's cunning intentions.

We may often feel weak and vulnerable, unable to see how we can stand up to the Herod's and foxes of our time. Yet in verse 31, Jesus promises that "on the third day I will finish my work." Is this a reference to Jesus' work on the cross where He declares "it is finished" and to the third day when He rose again? We have nothing to fear because tenderness, compassion, care for the weak and vulnerable will have the last word – no matter what the fox has to say!

Sainimili Kata, CWM European region Programme Associate



Hong Kong Council of Churches of Christ in China

As the HKCCCC celebrated its 100 years of existence last year, pray that the HKCCCC churches continue to embrace the ecumenical vision and dedicate themselves to exercising mission in unity crossing confessional differences. Pray for the School Chaplaincy Ministry that this project continues to operate smoothly in all CCC schools and there will be closer cooperation between schools and churches for furtherance of the school's vision and the mission of the Council.

Scriptures: Luke 13:1-9

Reflection

I was raised Roman Catholic. Central to the life of the Roman Church is the Eucharist and tied with it is the sacrament of repentance. To receive the body of Christ, one needs to repent by confessing personal sins to a priest. This is also a rite of passage in most Catholic schools. During my 3rd grade our class had a confession in preparation for our first communion.

Over time, especially in entering a protestant seminary, repentance which in Greek is metanoia, has become so much more than just being sorry for my petty sins. Surely, being sincerely sorry when one has made a mistake, offended someone or failed in our Christian commitment is necessary. Metanoia is a larger process of changing our hearts, minds and whole lives; a process of shedding away greed, selfishness and domination both in our individual lives and in our world.

The gospel of Luke is structurally framed with the message of metanoia, both individually and communally. This reading in Luke 13 is a hard one. It tells us that if people do not repent, albeit change – they will perish worse than what happened to some Galileans. At the same time, Jesus tells a parable that clearly shows metanoia as a process of change that bears fruit. Change requires time and cultivation, whose clear sign is its produce. The mission at the end of Luke's gospel is the metanoia of people. More than just being sorry for petty sins, the process of metanoia is a core principle of our worship and discipleship. Discipleship hopes to transform us in Christ to bear fruits for the world. Our changing lives becomes a living, breathing and moving worship of the Triune God only when through transformative discipleship we produce fruits of justice and peace, rooted in love.

Cristopher Joseph San Jose, Open Table Metropolitan Community Church, Face to Face Europe Participant 2017



United Reformed Church

The United Reformed Church seek prayers for:

- The Brexit process as test for multicultural Britain as welcoming place..
- The church's concern to deepen discipleship in ways that energise the witness of Christian people beyond the walls of the church.
- The church's need to be creative and realistic in arrangements for local church leadership.

Scripture: Luke 15:1-3; 11b-32

Reflection

When we read the Gospel reading for today, many people are often misled by the heading of Luke 15:11-32 which says "The Prodigal Son" or "The Lost Son". In reality, that is only one of the focal points of the text. And it might not be the main focus that Jesus himself intended.

Luke 15:1-2 tells us that the listeners of the parable were Pharisees and scribes who could not accept tax collectors and sinners joining in Jesus' company. So, Jesus told this parable to reflect the self-righteous mentality of the Pharisees and scribes. They were similar to the elder brother who even refused to call his brother "brother" but "this son of yours" (v. 30) and refused to go into the house to celebrate with them.

Sometimes, Christians also have this kind of self-righteous mentality or superiority complex. We think that we are chosen by God and saved by the blood of Christ but others are not. We are deserving but they are not. We are better than others because we respond to the message of the Gospel but others do not. We are better off in our life because we are clever and hard-working. Those who are poor and have hard lives are lazy and foolish. We don't want to mingle with those drug addicts, gays and lesbians, divorced couples and even poor people because we think that we are not their kind and we don't want others to mix "us" with "them". Is it not surprising then that those who are not Christians sometimes reject the Gospel because they don't see the love of God in our lives? They only see the judgment from God through our message.

Truly, the Gospel lesson we read today is not just a message of repentance for the lost son, but also for the self-righteous son, not just for non-Christians, but also for those of us who call ourselves followers of Jesus Christ.

Po Kam-cheong, Hong Kong Council of the Church of Christ in China

Prayers

Church of North India

We pray with the Church of North India especially remembering:

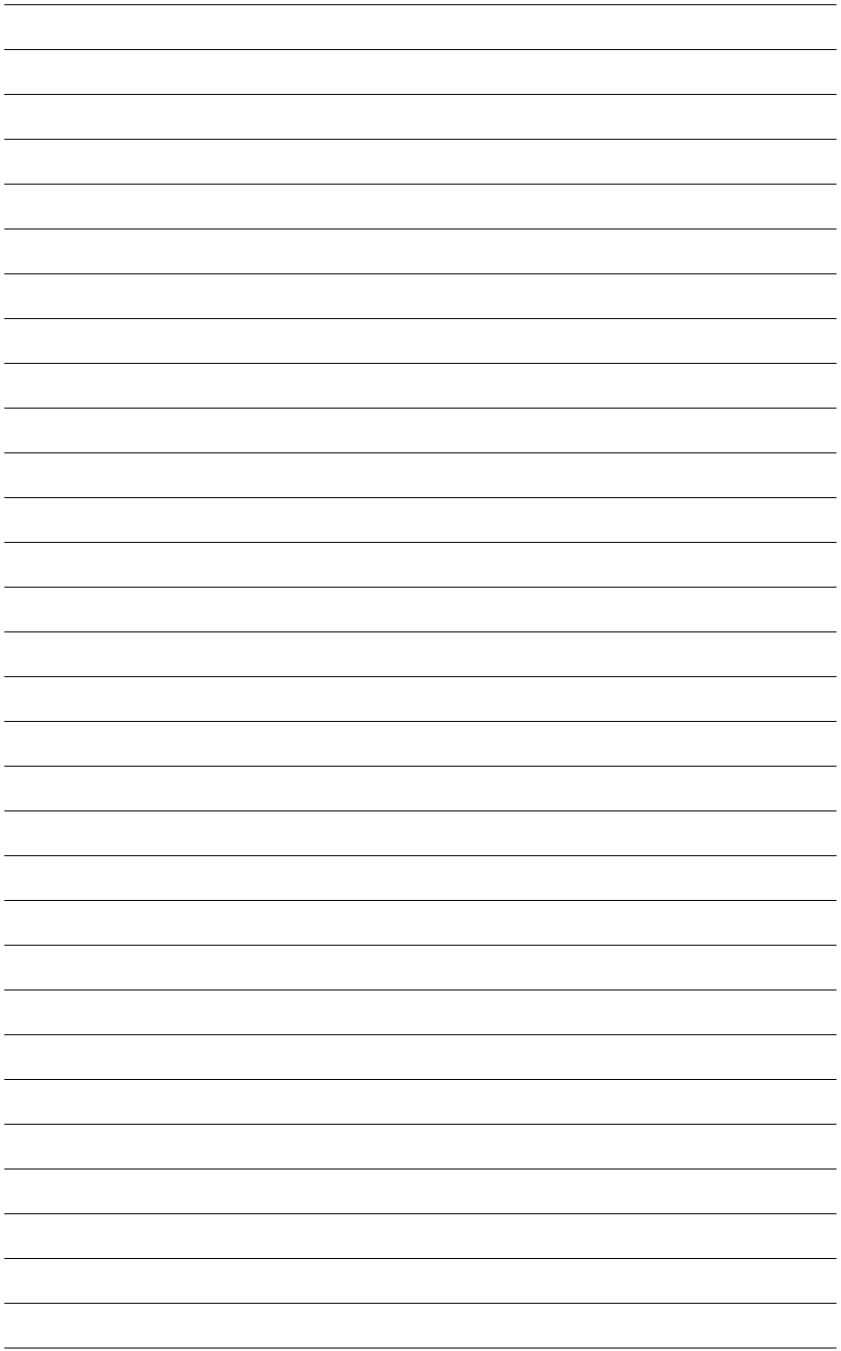
- The leadership of the church both locally and nationally.
- The Satyanniketan school of theology.
- The evangelist training programme.
- Five doctoral studies candidates who begin their studies in 2019.

April

*You cannot reap what you
have not sown. How are
you going to reap love in
our community if you only
sow hate?*

- Oscar Romero





Inclusive Community – What is your worth?

Scripture: John 12:1-8

Reflection

In a world where changes are constantly happening, our values in life are prone to change through time. Everything in life possesses some sort of value. Values are often placed on things such as cars, our homes, our furniture and so forth. We as people also possess a sense of value, although not monetary. We are valuable in and of ourselves and to one another, whether it be through friendship, familial ties and other relationships. In instances we might question our worth and value in life.

Within the story Mary was seen to wash the feet of Jesus with a perfume that was worth more than any perfume that one can think. Criticized on such actions by Judas, Mary's action in a modern-day context would yet be criticized in view of the pervasiveness of poverty in the world. However, Mary's action was of more value than any price of perfume. In the context of Christ's way toward the cross what Mary did is of greater importance than money. The story raises for us the question of what we value most in life, and how we see ourselves in light of the Christ Event.

What is your worth? Although we may struggle to understand our worth and value in life, we know that Christ incarnated for the sake of humankind and creation Jesus Christ was killed as a consequence of the life he lived and taught. Despite who we used to be, despite our many faults in life, God's inclusivity for all of humankind serves as a reminder that we are of value. Our worth and value is in who we are with Jesus Christ. We are worth more than materialistic things in life and what society has typically made us out to be. We are all children of God!

Craig Masaniai, Congregational Christian Church in American Samoa



Member Mission Forums Meetings

Please pray for CWM and particularly the Member Mission Forums which meet in the Regions of CWM, that they may be a time of discerning and learning together.

Scripture: Psalm 118:1-2, 19-29; Luke 19:28-40; John 12:12-16

Reflection

Today's readings revolve around what has become known as Palm Sunday. Luke and Matthew (19:12-13) have Jesus drive out sellers and buyers from the Temple. (John 2:13-22 records that Jesus does this during his first Passover pilgrimage to Jerusalem). Pilgrims from all over the Jewish world travel to Jerusalem to celebrate Passover. To help those who'd travelled far basic services are provided, and one of these is trade for sacrificial animals: oxen, lamb and doves.

In the outer court that day, it is worth remembering that a market monopoly is in operation, namely the monopoly on the dove market. Poorer people use doves for sacrifice. This squeezes money from those who come to worship, and imposes huge financial burdens on the poor while bringing in exorbitant profits for the Temple authorities. In fact, the Temple sacrifice during the reign of High Priest Annas was dubbed as the marketplace of the family of Annas (the High Priest). Not only is the merchandising so corrupt and unjust, it makes genuine and solemn worship difficult: 'Instead of solemn dignity and murmur of prayer there is the bellowing of cattle and bleating of sheep. Instead of brokenness and contrition, holy adoration and prolonged petition, there is noisy commerce.' It is no wonder that Jesus is very angry and acts as he did.

This text invites us to reflect on economic injustices perpetrated under the name of economic development and growth. Economics (Greek oikos-nomos) has to do with the oikos or our home, the Earth. It has to do with the way things are integrated to make our home function. Palm Sunday opens up for us the needed space to think deeply about the economic suffering of millions of people in the name of economic growth.

Cliff Bird, CWM Mission Secretary, Pacific Region



Palm Sunday

Jesus, king of kings who comes riding on a donkey we celebrate your presence and greet you as our Lord and Saviour.

Scriptures: Psalm 36:5-11

Reflection

After reading Psalm 35:5-11, what one gets from reading the passage are two things which frame our meditation, God of love and justice, or God of love or justice.

First, God is presented as the loving, faithful and righteous God. God of love and justice. God is given praise and honour for the gifts of love, life, light, shelter, and drink amongst other things. God cares not only for people but animals.

Second, God is not only concerned with the Spirit, but also the material conditions of people. The mentioning of the house, which represents shelter that poor people long for, drink to quench their thirst, but also water to wash their bodies if one thinks of contexts where water is a commodity. But what one gets also is while God provides all these things for humanity in abundance there are people and systems that rob people of these. In the name of God many people go to bed on empty stomachs, have no shelter but they are assured that they have a place in God's house. The South African situation is a model of how God of love is juxtaposed with God of justice, as nuanced in the famous statement, "when the missionaries came, we African people had the land and they had the Bible. They said, 'Let us pray', and when we opened our eyes after the prayer, they had the land and we had the Bible."

To feed systems of injustice, God of justice must be separated from that of love, otherwise there won't be any justification for exploitation and robbing of people. The separation is intended to dissuade the exploited from resisting exploitation and find solace in the fact that even in their poverty or lack of shelter, amongst other things, God loves them and that should be enough. Systems and structures that make people to set their minds on things above, i.e. heaven, spirit and not material, that must be debunked!

Fundiswa Kobo, Women of Faith, Uniting Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa

Prayers

Congregational Union of New Zealand

Please pray for the CUNZ as they seek ways to partner with government and other stakeholders to address the growing problem of homelessness in the context of rising property prices beyond people's affordability level.

God's Protection

Scripture: Isaiah 49:1-7; Psalm 71:1-14;
1 Corinthians 1:18-31; John 12:20-36; Psalm 137

Reflection

We live in a world that riddled with challenges and hardships, and broken due to ideologies that are self-centered and profit-oriented. Worship of money has become the dominant religion which dictates the norms of our world. Every decision, every act, every movement, every thought and what else are all framed within that norm. To become successful, one needs to be aggressive, and all obstacles are to be trampled and removed. Faith within that framework has become secularized where God is portrayed and seen as one with pots of gold and silver who favors the rich and the powerful. There is minimal consideration for the weak, the poor and marginalized: they are simply objects and means to be used for the benefit of the powerful and the rich.

We might be facing the worst challenge the world has ever faced, in the form of Climate Change and Sea Level Rise, and a careful investigation into the cause of this problem will lead us to see what has been described above – a corrupt world, where nature and the most vulnerable are just commodities to be used. Such a sad world that is very far from world intended by God. Our Psalm is a cry of David during his old age. Some scholars believe it was written during Absalom's rebellion against his old aged father. But the core of the psalm lies in the fact that David in his old age, still holds on to his faith in God, and his hope for protection in the midst of all the trials and hardships he faced lies with God, and God alone. It is important that such hope should invoke in us a will to act and proclaim God's justice and reign even in the face of an increasingly complex and complicated world.

Tafue Lusama, Ekalesia Kelisiano Tuvalu



Presbyterian Church of Wales

We pray for the Presbyterian Church of Wales as they develop a new Mission Support Programme and discern new mission priorities.

Scripture: John 13:21-32

Reflection

Annually, we journey with Jesus to Jerusalem and cling with him more closely this week, knowing what will happen to him this week-end. Many people do not like Judas and blame him for handing over Jesus to the authorities to be crucified. We label him as the traitor, betrayer and money lover.

In the story Jesus, Judas, the disciples and Satan are the characters. Jesus is the main character through whom the story unfolds. First, he starts off by announcing with the betrayer (v.21). Secondly, he commanded Judas to go and do his "thing" (v.27b), and after Judas left, he proclaimed that the Son and God have been glorified. Would God and the Son be glorified had Judas not done his job? We could even say Jesus commissioned Judas by giving him the dipping of the bread.

In the story the disciples and Judas are voiceless. The disciples are confused while Judas fulfills orders from Jesus! Did Judas think about the consequences of his actions? At that time? Into the future? His actions determined the future history of Christianity. In a similar way, we contribute to shaping the history of our future today.

Satan was blamed by John (and Matthew) for getting into Judas. Likewise, we always seem to blame Satan for our own misdeeds. Satan is always a means of escape for many of us instead of facing the truth about ourselves and taking responsibility for our own actions and wrongs.

Sierra Bird, United Church in Solomon Islands



United Church in Solomon Islands

Lord God, forgive us, for our prejudices which always leads to inward looking. Help us by your Spirit to be courageous like your Son. Empower us to discern your kingdom and your will be done in our world today. Use us as a channel to liberate and transform lives. Amen.

Face to Face

Please pray for the CWM Face to Face programmes which bring together theology students to explore a contemporary mission theme in community together.

Scripture: Exodus 12:1-4

Reflection

The Passover ceremony with its attendant teaching began in the Hebrew community the night before they left the slavery of Egypt. This week's lectionary readings highlight the nature of full responsibility to future generations bathed in thankful prayer. Ceremony requires something be done correctly and with gravity. Nothing less than an embodied commitment is required. God's faithfulness is the example and inspiration for human faithfulness.

Indigenous ceremony teaches and requires proper protocol. Each action conveys meaning and value. My Cayuga grandmother asked, "Are you going to the doings?" To her ceremonies are not just abstract rituals but embodied "doings," living things. Indigenous ceremony requires one's whole being engaged in sacred action. The Creator is good, the good creation carries on being good, as human's cleanse and realign with the good through ceremony.

The Lord's Supper and Indigenous ceremony have this full orb'd engagement in common. The Apostle Paul warned the Corinthian Church to not treat The Lord's Supper lightly lest there be judgment. Indigenous ceremony is respected, with ill effects if not observed properly. Indigenous Christians in Canada know this deep sacredness in ceremony. An embodied faith is an embodied love. How can someone say they love God/Creator and not love their fellow human? They cannot!

"Oh God, who showed the fullness of love for humanity and all creation in the gift of their child, help us embody your love in our love of our neighbours and enemies. Creator, who made all things good, help us to set things right again when we stray from the good way. Amen, Dahnohtohn."

Adrian Jacobs, Ecumenical Partner, Keeper of the Circle,
Sandy-Saulteaux Spiritual Centre, Beausejour, Manitoba, Canada



Maundy Thursday

Loving God, you show in Christ how to serve one another, May we, illumined by your Spirit, find new and subversive ways to serve and so see your kingdom come.

Scripture: John 18:1-19:42

Reflection

Good Friday! There are many Fridays throughout the year – are they not good? Of course all Fridays are good! But this Friday is very special. It brought Good News not only to us as Christians but to all people on earth. It is a day of victory for all of humankind though it has not come easily.

From this day God has forgiven all of us and accepts us as Her/His children. It has opened a new era for all so it is good. Through this event, God showed Her/His mercy and presence with us!! Yes, because God sent Her/His son to show us how to live. Throughout the Old Testament, we see that God was always with Her/His chosen nation and children. God saved them, journeyed with them, provided for their need, protected them from their enemies. Through the prophets, God reminds them of how He saves and loves them. Even in Psalm 22, the Psalmist remembers the same salvation story and that God was with them always.

It is the same for us today. He is present with us in every situation. He is the God who says, "I am who I am." He is God of yesterday, today and tomorrow. He is with us. When we look at the seven words of Christ on the cross we see Him praying and forgiving us. He did not forget His mother and His disciples; He asked His disciple John to care for His mother and requested His mother to care for her son. Through this, we can see He never leaves us alone; rather He is with us to save, protect, guide and comfort us. Let us experience His presence within and around us and let us praise Him as the Psalmist praised Him.

Shourabh Pholia, Church of Bangladesh

Prayers

Good Friday

Today we remember your sacrifice upon the cross and all who give up their lives for the liberty of others.

Scripture: Psalm 31:1-4; 15-16

Reflection

"For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life." (St. John 3:16 NIV)

As a boy growing up in rural Guyana I, like other young boys, looked forward to the Easter Holidays. Palm Sunday, Good Friday and Easter Sunday Services were special events. Holy Week was the high point of the Lenten observances. But, for young boys Easter meant kite-flying. This began on Palm Sunday and kites were flown throughout the week until Easter Monday.

When we became older we began to realize that Easter was really about God's love for His people and what God has done for us through His Son, Jesus. In this scenario God has also painted a profound picture of the extent of His love by demonstrating His care towards Jesus, sacrificed for our redemption, as His broken body lay lifeless in the tomb. Jesus' words at this juncture could very well mirror that of the Psalmist – "In You, [Father], I have taken refuge; let Me never be put to shame; deliver Me in Your righteousness." (Psalm 31:1-4).

Holy Saturday brings to our attention a lesson which Christians should never forget and should always live out in our daily lives. Today we should reminisce on the attitude and behavior of the people who were present on that first Easter Saturday, whether they were disciples or detractors. Everyone was anticipating what would happen on the 'third day.' Holy Saturday should, therefore, be a day of quiet reflection as we await the victory which emerges in the Resurrection, signaling to the world God really cares and that His care never fails.

May we follow our Heavenly Father's example by extending care to all people, especially those who are suffering pain and anguish in daily living, and persons who are experiencing situations for which they see no end. God's care is sufficient for everyone!

Keith Hayley, Guyana Congregational Union



Partners in Mission

Please pray for the Partners in Mission who serve member churches and ecumenical partners through this important CWM programme.

Scripture: Luke 24:1-12

Reflection

Although we have all heard of amazing events and wonderful stories from around the world our focus this Easter Sunday is on Resurrection: The Never-Ending Story.

The most interesting part of this story is each of the Gospel writers agree on one thing - the first witnesses to the resurrection and the first people to share the news are women. In Luke's Gospel we hear about a group of women including Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James and other women who share the astonishing news that Jesus is risen with the disciples (v. 10).

During the conversation these women are having with the angels, the angels ask them, "why do you seek the living among the dead?" (v. 5). It seems strange to the angels that the women are visiting the graveyard where great stories and ideas are dead and buried – finished! But they discover the opposite is true, Jesus' story does not end at the graveyard but his story lives on. Suddenly, the women "remembered His words" (v. 8) and were enthused to share the Good News.

On this Resurrection Sunday, let us remember all Jesus has promised us. Let us remember that he to those who think their sicknesses have conquered them, he comes with healing mercies. Let us remember he is the resurrection and life to those who truly believe in him and that Jesus is the greatest Messiah who ever lived on earth and when our lives seem to be shuttered or closed down by difficult circumstances, he has the final life-giving word. Jesus who triumphs over evil, the grave and death, and we too, will overcome seemingly impossible situations if we continue to depend and believe in the power of Resurrection: The Never-Ending Story.

Goodwin Zainga, Churches of Christ in Malawi



Easter Day

Risen Lord, may we like Mary not hold you back, clinging onto what has been. Instead may we meet you in Galilee and all the world as we find you in new and surprising ways.

Scripture: Acts 5:27-32

Reflection

In these days we are more and more confronted with “fake news”. We have to be careful with every message we receive. So called “social media” are propagating many false and fabricated news. In the meantime, this habit has become a practice of statesmen, like the American president. Hence, the words of the Apostle Peter have even become more important: “We must obey God rather than men” (Acts. 5, 29). This passage is included in the story where the apostles have been miraculously liberated from jail (Acts 5:19.20) and were again caught by the Pharisees while they were preaching about Jesus Christ and his “full message of this new life” (Acts. 5, 20). The high priest reminded the apostles, that he gave the order “not to teach in this name” (Acts. 5, 28) anymore.

Peter had to follow what the Spirit has given to him, therefore he replied, that we have to “obey God rather than men.” As disciples of God His word becomes imminently important and crucial for our new life. It leads us in which way we should include ourselves in society and community. When we realise through the guidance of the Holy Spirit that the authorities or even governments – in short the Empire - is acting against the will of God, we have to ask our conscience, what Christ would have done. The result is not always an easy way. Actually, some Christians following that call have even lost their lives. As disciples of Christ we have to raise our voices against injustices and oppression, against marginalisation and racism and against sexual harassment and gender injustice and to speak into the society we live in. We are called to become transforming disciples, turning the contemporary world upside down (Acts. 17,6).

Benjamin Simon, Partner in Mission - World Council of Churches Ecumenical Institute Bossey



United Congregational Church of Southern Africa

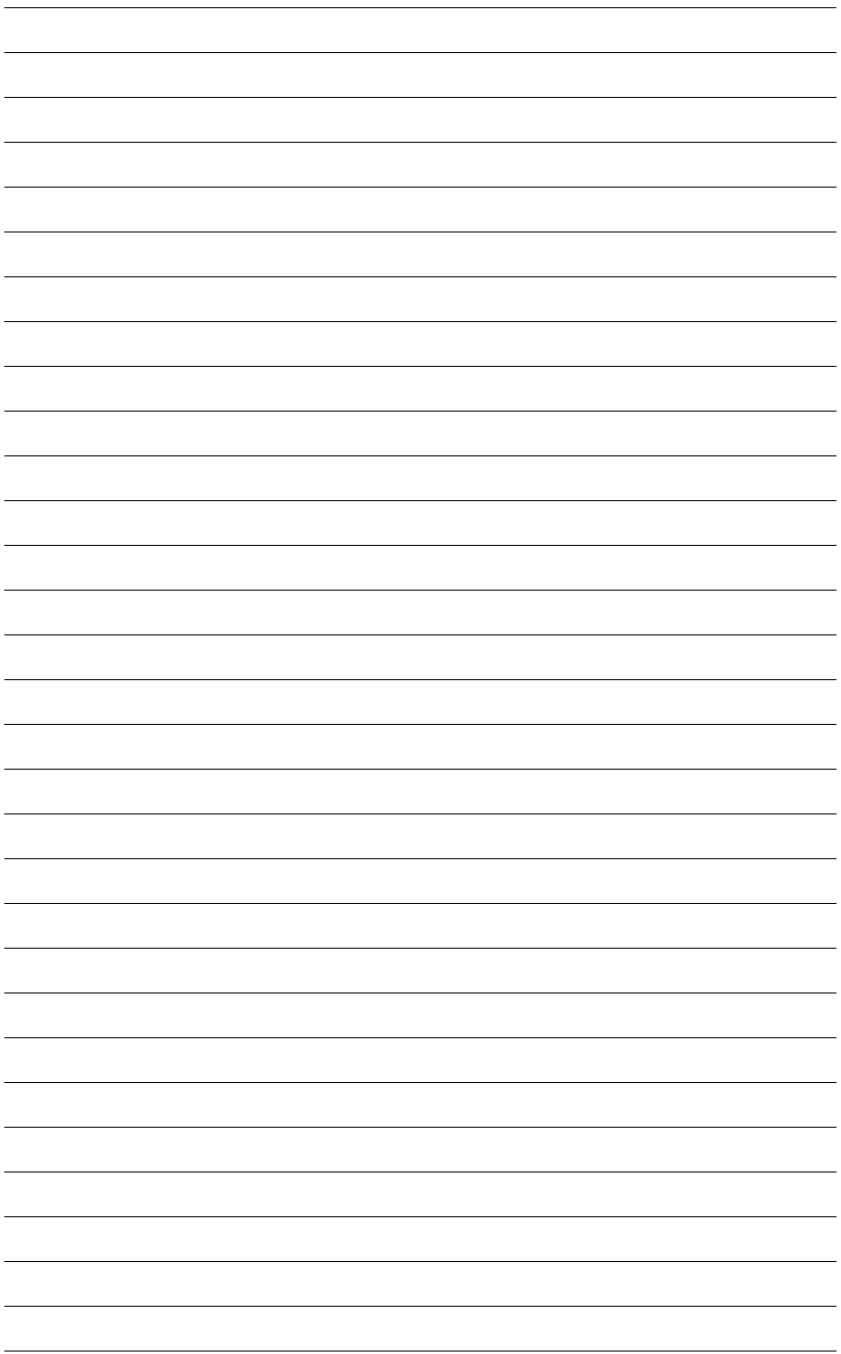
The United Church of Southern Africa requests prayers as together they seek to discern and elect a new General Secretary to serve the church.



*Heat not a furnace for your foe
so hot that it do singe yourself.
- William Shakespeare*

May





Scripture: John 21:1-19

Reflection

In John 21, Jesus and Peter exchange "I love you!" three times. In the Greek Jesus asks Peter if he loves him with an agape kind of love. Peter responds with a filial kind of love. Again, Jesus asks with agape. Peter responds with filial. On the third go, Jesus adjusts. He asks for filial love. Peter responds with filial.

God asks us to love unconditionally, to love the unlovable, to love those who can never love us back. Agape. But like Peter, we can only offer what we can offer right now. Mutuality. Reciprocity. The love most of us know. Filial.

So many among us who confess to be followers of Jesus promise to offer what we actually do not have. We will volunteer our services when we get a vacation. We will give more support when we get a raise. We will serve the church and its ministries when our situation changes for the better. The future is in God's hands. Not ours.

Only in John do we find the source of the five barley loaves and two fish that led to the feeding of the 5000. It was from a child. A poor child. One among the hungry multitude. He offered what he had.

In the narrative, Jesus adjusts. He asks Peter for the best but when Peter could not, Jesus accepts what Peter could offer right now. What we can offer right now is better than the best we can offer tomorrow. Especially for a world that needs to be fed, to be given drink, to be welcomed, to be visited, to be clothed, to hear the Good News! Right now.

Revelation E Ventura, Union Theological Seminary, Philippines



Theological Colleges

We pray for the member churches' theological colleges where new leaders are educated and shaped for mission and ministry.

Interfaith Relations and Ecumenism

Scripture: John 10:22-30

Reflection

Breaking out of our theological moulds to understand God's prerogatives is often one of the hardest things for us to do as God's people. The Jews in our story today reject Jesus because they are so locked-in by their own theological presumptions that they fail to recognise the Messiah for who he is.

To be sure, the faith of the Jews in Jesus' day was a pluralistic one. The religious texts coming from this period reflect an amazing array of perspectives relating to the identity of the Messiah. Some writings (e.g. Psalms of Solomon) understand him to be a human figure who is empowered by the spirit of God to accomplish God's purpose in the end times, much like the Judges who were used by God to deliver his people in the Old Testament. Others (e.g. 1 Enoch) portray him as an angelic figure, like Melchizedek (who is also understood as an angelic being). Some see the Messiah as a political figure, who comes to restore the throne of David. Others see him as a priestly leader, who comes to lead his people to purity.

Given this plurality and complexity in understanding the figure of the Messiah, the Jews would see that perhaps they could all be right or wrong in some ways. Until the actual coming of God's Messiah, while they may have their own particular convictions of who that person might be like, they should also remain open to understanding God's purpose afresh. In reality, the Messiah is both a human and divine figure, with both a priestly as well as a kingly side to his ministry.

It is, therefore, lamentable to see how quickly the Jews reject the claims of Jesus in John 10:22-42. Jesus performed miracles which demonstrates he is sent by God. He then proclaims that he is none other than the Son of God. The Jews understand this to be a claim that he is God as well (see Jn 10:33 cf. v. 36). But they rejected it.

We, too, live in a time when there is a variety of theological perspectives among those who identify themselves as Christians. Most of these read the Scripture like we do. Some views are based on the correct interpretation of Scripture, while others are probably not. However, in the midst of our own theological convictions, how open are we towards understanding God's prerogatives afresh as we observe his hand at work around us?

The Lord's words in this passage are very telling. The sheep who belong to Jesus would hear his voice, and Jesus would know them (v. 27). These are the ones to whom he has given eternal life, and no one can take them out of his hand. The Jews are stricken by a spiritual blindness that prevents them from recognising the Messiah for who he is. They are embroiled in a religiosity (even accusing Jesus of blasphemy) that hinders rather than facilitates their understanding of God's prerogatives.

Interfaith Relations and Ecumenism



Protestant Church in the Netherlands

We give thanks for the Protestant Church in the Netherlands and its church pioneering programme as a way of developing churches that reach out to diverse communities.

Scriptures: Acts 11: 1-18

Reflection

Do we find sometimes that we're stuck in a rut and that we carry on in our normal routine without stopping to question it in any way? 'But we've always done it this way' is such a common protest in the face of change. Re-examining long-held views can be very challenging and leave us feeling insecure and uncertain, but the story of Peter's vision shows us that God is always seeking to enlighten us. Like Peter, we may need to have the message reinforced several times before we take it on board, but once we do, as the final section of this passage demonstrates, we bear more fruit and develop further in our knowledge and love of God, contributing to the work of his kingdom and bringing others to him.

In 2019 we are part of an age of instant communication, where technology enables us to let others know that we are disciples of Jesus at the touch of a button. This gives us unprecedented power to evangelize, but also huge responsibility. Many use technology to spread hatred and treat others with disrespect, and it's all too easy for us to get sucked into discussions where we lose sight of Jesus' teaching and his new commandment to love one another (John 13:34-35). Our instinctive reaction may be to keep our heads down so that we avoid confrontation, or perhaps go in 'all guns blazing', only to find that we ourselves start using dismissive, derogatory language.

Our role as evangelizing disciples has never been more important, and we have an unprecedented opportunity to demonstrate in word and deed our love for all our brothers and sisters.

Fiona Gannon, Union of Welsh Independents



Prayers

Ekalesia Kelisiano Tuvalu

Give thanks to God for the services offered by the former leaders of EKT. Pray for the new leaders of the church as they navigate the church forward in the context of climate change and its impacts.

Scripture: John 5:1-9

Reflection

In any community that there are times when we find ourselves neglected and ignored in times of need by others for various reasons. We could lose hope and try to find a way or a miracle to be saved. The passage for us today portrays the same image where Jesus saw a man lying at the pool of Bethzatha wanting to be saved, but there is no one there to put him inside the pool when the water is stirred up. Ironically, the name of the pool Bethzatha, means “the house of mercy”.

This expectation for a miracle is underpinned by verse 4 which says, “waiting for the stirring of the water; for an angel of the Lord went down at certain seasons into the pool, and stirred up the water; whoever stepped in first after the stirring of the water was made well from whatever disease that person had” (KJV). The community of our passage believed this and that is why many sick people – the blind, lame and paralysed – were lying at this pool waiting for a miracle to save them. The man in our passage is in a medical condition that prevents him from being the first person in the pool.

The man might not know Jesus until that time but we as Christians know Jesus as our Lord and saviour. Yet there are times that we lose sight of him for things that we thought could save us and to restore our normal life in a community. The passage challenges us whether we are ill or marginalized, only if we believe in Jesus Christ and live and love as Christ did. In this way we part and parcel of the Inclusive Community of Christ where we will see that no one is left aside.

Keebwa Tira, Kiribati Uniting Church



Directors Meeting

Please pray for the CWM Board of Directors who meet this week.

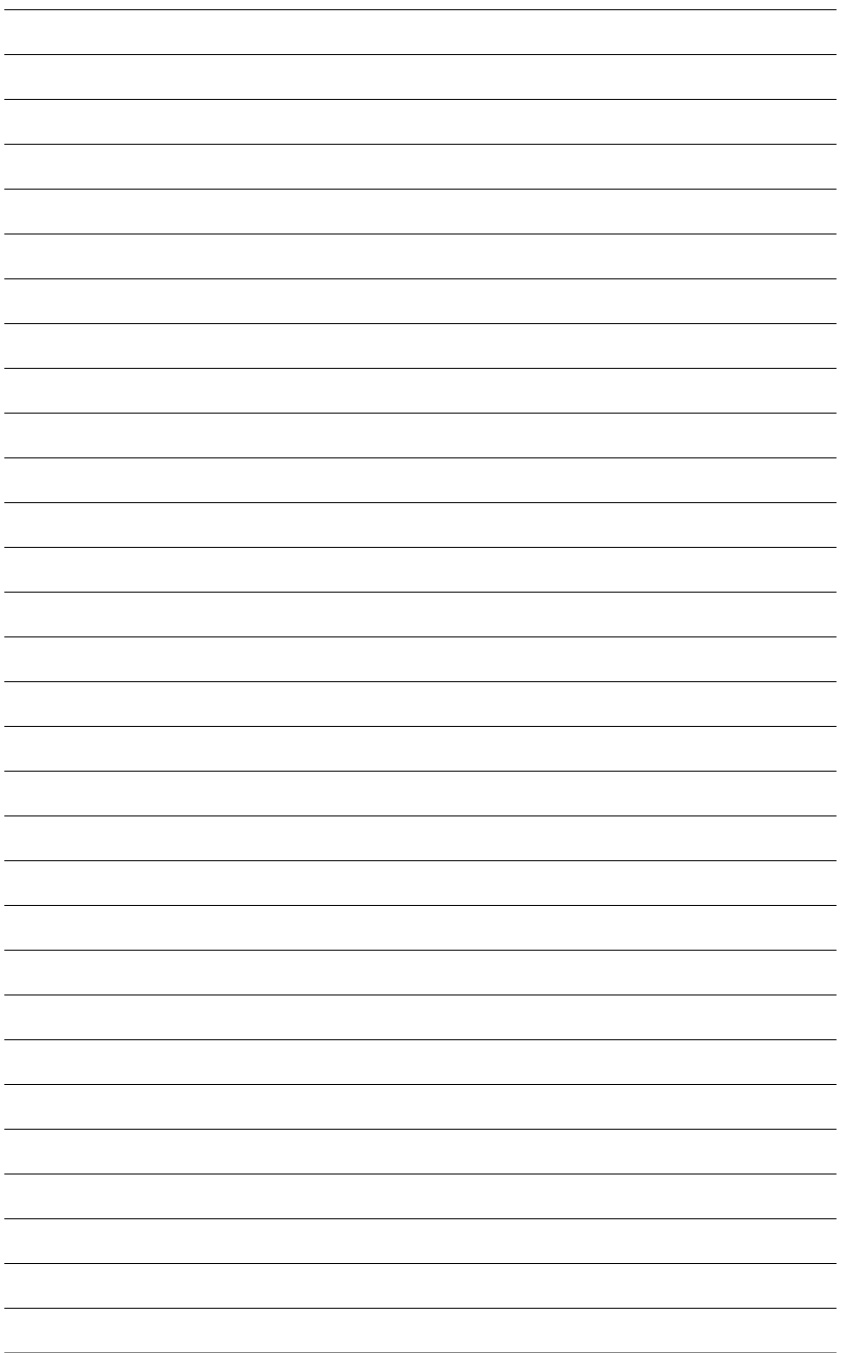


*Stand for something or you will fall
for anything. Today's mighty oak is
yesterday's nut that held its ground.*

- Rosa Parks

June





Interfaith Relations and Ecumenism

Scripture: John 17: 20-26

Reflection

Jesus is the role model for interfaith relation and ecumenism. Throughout his life Jesus related to all kinds of people. In his high priestly prayer he said, "I in them and you in me—so that they may be brought to complete unity. Then the world will know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me." (John 17:23). He testifies that our God is a relational God, who reaches out in grace.

When we talk about ecumenism and relationship, it was very important to keep the relationship with children, youth and women. Jesus included women and children in His circle of followers—even women from questionable backgrounds. Jesus let women know they were intelligent and intrinsically worthy of God's love and concern. Jesus was sensitive to the social and religious handicaps with which orphans, widows, and people with various disabilities had to struggle, and He lifted those burdens. He was compassionate and caring. Jesus had dialogue with a young man and made Him understand how to give up his wealth to the service of God and humanity. By doing this Jesus acknowledged them as people created in the image of God.

Jesus interacted with all regardless of their caste, colour, race, faith, gender or age. Dialogue with Samaritan woman is a very strong example. He showed His relation with people of other faiths and invites all to have the same relationship, and respect even the women for greater ecumenism. He asks us to love our neighbours as ourselves. Jesus broke all the barriers that hinder unity and stop people experiencing God's abundance love. Therefore, Jesus is the role model for us to have interfaith relations and greater ecumenism. Being a follower of Jesus we should be a follower in His footsteps for interfaith relation and ecumenism.

Shourabh Pholia, Training in Mission participant



Annual Members' Meeting

Please pray for the Annual Members' Meeting which brings together all the CWM member churches for discussion, information sharing and fellowship.

Scripture: Acts 2: 1-21

Reflection

The first Pentecost happened 50 days after Easter – it has a strong connection with the Jewish festival commemorating the Mount Sinai event when God appeared to Moses and made that covenant, “I am your God; you are my people”. Pentecost therefore reminds the Israelites about God’s covenant, the same can be seen in Acts 2:1-21 where God through the Holy Spirit speaks to all people and confirms that they can know they are God’s people.

At Pentecost we are reminded that the spirit of God descended in the form of fire and the great wind shook the walls of the house where the disciples were waiting. Before the outpouring of the Spirit the disciples were afraid and scared! The empire around them caused them not to spread the good news – they were afraid. At Pentecost, the disciples as well as the believers, were baptized with the Holy Spirit and they were given the power to be God’s witnesses. They journeyed from fear to faith.

At Pentecost, a new Church began, a Church where everyone is welcome – Jew or gentile. It is at Pentecost we see a God of plurality, the one who breaks the barrier among the Jews and the gentiles and the one who affirms that all who call upon the Lord shall be saved. Reflecting on the events of Pentecost, as a Church are we baptized with the Holy Spirit which enables us to be powerful witnesses in the midst of the empire, both internal as well external? Are we as a Church breaking barriers and people called to be one in unity? Pentecost reminds us and helps us to re-examine our own lives as to whether we are afraid of the empire or fighting against it as the witnesses that God wants us to be.

May God help us to break the chain of empire.

Precious Star Tmung, Youth from Presbyterian Church of India



Pentecost

Come Holy Spirit, bring refreshing and renewal to your church throughout the world. May we be alive to your Spirit and awake to the new possibilities for abundant life that she offers.

Scripture: Psalm 8

Reflection

'The heaven and earth declares the glory of the almighty God'

Over the past three decades, climate change has become an increasingly prominent topic on the global agenda as advocates have marshaled scientific, policy, and moral support to protect the environment. Climate change has come about because humanity has failed to take up the great responsibility entrusted to them from the beginning by the almighty God.

The writer of Psalm 8 clearly points out the God given responsibility to humanity to rule after God's creation. This responsibility is seen also in the Genesis creation story of chapter 1:24-28. The God of all creation is mindful of humanity and that He gave them power and authority to rule over His creation such as all flocks and herds, and the animals of the wild, the birds in the sky, and the fish in the sea, all that swim the paths of the seas.

As Christians we are reminded that God entrusted us to nature the beauty of his creation. Being created in his likeness Genesis 1:26, God expects us to look at the heavens and earth and its inhabitants exactly the way he sees them. Hence the need to nurture the environment in the manner we would want God to nature us. Let us strive to promote environmental consciousness with an aim to fulfill a responsibility for the common good.

In conclusion all humanity depends on the nature, flora and fauna. Therefore, it is everyone's responsibility to take care of God's creation in order to live in harmony. If we fail to nature Gods creation, each one of us will be held responsible on the Day of Judgement for failing in our duties.

Amen.

Doran Munsimbwe, A New Face Participant



The Church of South India

The Church of South India invites our prayers for:

- The mission work of the church especially amongst the Dalit people, refugees and asylum seekers.
- The empowerment of women and marginalised communities.
- The 1600 local congregations to become child friendly congregations.

Scripture: 1 Kings 21:1-14

Reflection

The story of Naboth's vineyard is a tragically economic injustice in 1 King 21. It tells us that when a man confronts with a merciless and arrogant regime, his fundamentally economic essence can hardly be protected and preserved.

The main character, Naboth, is a victim of the economic injustice in the story. He is just a vineyard owner, who faithfully protects his ancestors' lands and goody heritage. He should have his own claim to this vineyard; however, King Ahad's greediness and selfishness cause a bloody consequence to the land owner. In this story, Ahad wants to buy Naboth's vineyard as his own vegetable garden. To Ahad, it's just a vegetable garden; but to Naboth, it's his own "ancestral inheritance".

As we know, Naboth had been framed and killed by the cunning hand of Jezebel, Ahad's wife. He was intentionally accused of "cursing God and king" and finally charged. (1 Kgs 21:10-14) What a tragedy to a loyal man to his fathers' land. Ironically, through reading the story, we come to know that Naboth is a man who have the fear of God so that he forbids himself to sell his ancestral inheritance. His sayings implies that the relation between God and land influences his economic behavior. It is probably that he understands his ancestors' economic gains are deeply related to this land given by God.

In the world economic, land is very essential. Without land, we have nothing to eat; without land, we have no place to survive. Moreover, lands are usually given by our ancestors. However, just by one piece of paper from the government, our lands must be reluctantly given to them with tears and anger. We all face the loss of our economic essence, and "ancestral inheritance".

As a Taiwan Indigenous People, land is a fundamental essence to the whole economic system in my community. If land is violently taken by a vicious regime, my people will face a collapse of economic function. Unfortunately, the story of Naboth also happened to Taiwan indigenous people. Lands has been stolen, violently taken, and cheated by Taiwan governments in the name of "development". To them, it's their developments; but to my people, it's my "ancestral inheritance".

Vavauni Ljaljegean, Presbyterian Church in Taiwan

**Kiribati Uniting Church**

We remember the Kiribati Uniting Church, especially for:

- The New Strategic Plan from 2019 - 2023 that the focus will be on practical ways on the development of missional congregations.
- The unity of the church.
- The ongoing success of the church's Mission Support Programme.

Cost of True Discipleship

Scripture: Luke 9:51-62

Reflection

Luke 9: 59 – ‘He said to another man, “Follow me”, (NIV).

Never thought of becoming a servant of God. Rejected twice from a Theological Seminary due to age restrictions. Yet being accepted in God's way and became the youngest seminarian at the age of 18. One year after graduation was ordained and became a Church Minister. Despite the hardships of theological training, a voice continued to be heard “follow me”.

After reading Luke 9:59, we see that the former man's statement was not out of the blue at all. Notice how it carefully says, “He said to another.” Evidently Jesus had said it to one. Now He says it to another. Jesus had been telling His disciples to, “Follow me.” Jesus was waiting for their replies, one by one. How do you personally respond to Jesus' command, “Follow me”? It sound strange for someone to leave the life that he/she is living and to just follow. To follow without knowing where to go is a challenge, and yet this is a call to true discipleship. Go to the unknown, hear their unspoken voice, engage them with care and love.

We have a calling to follow Jesus. Following Jesus is a life call. We must not let comforts, convenience or our choices distract us from our devotion to Jesus. Once we do, then our whole lives will change and those around us will want to know more about Jesus. Without this life commitment, we stand at odds with Jesus.

Let us Pray: We continue to ask for your spirit to guide us as we seeks to understand what that lie ahead in your mission, partner with us Lord so that we may not fail in our calling, and grant us with your knowledge to understand your mysteries. In Jesus name we pray ... Amen

Kautoa Moloti, Ekalesia Kelisiano Tuvalu



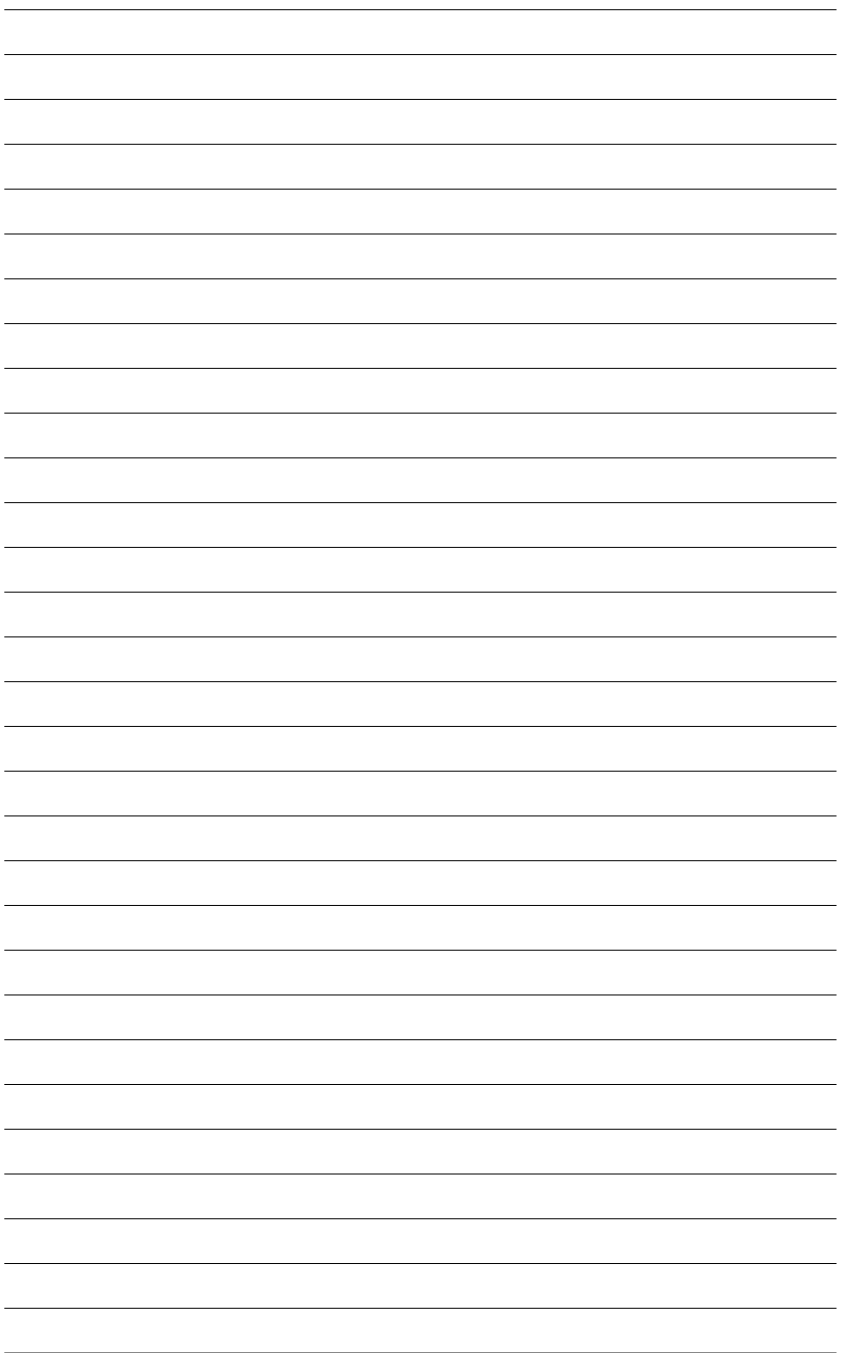
Training in Mission

Please pray for the Training in Mission (TIM) programme which brings together young people to learn and participate in God's mission.



July

*I'm for truth, no matter who tells it.
I'm for justice, no matter who it's for or against.
- Malcolm X*



Building Inclusive Communities

Scripture: 2Kings 5:1-14, Psalm 30; Isaiah 66:10-14, Psalm 66:1-9, Galatians 6:(1-6) 7-16; Luke 10:1-11, 16-20

Reflection

In recent years, there have been numerous tragic incidents resulting from the special vulnerability of migrants in many parts of the world. In the United Kingdom (UK), United States of America (USA), South Africa and other parts of the world, threats against foreign nationals have been fuelled by the myth that their presence contributes to high levels of crime, poverty and unemployment in the country. Anti-migration policies have been drafted in such countries. Countless restrictive measures have been placed on almost every migration stream. These rising xenophobic forms of nationalism threaten the common values of Christianity – to embrace hospitality and inclusivity.

The narrative of Naaman's healing from a skin disease illustrates how God's love transcends one's race, nationality, gender or social status. The international character of the story and the author's sympathy for the marginalized is striking. Firstly, Naaman, the powerful commander of the army in Syria has a skin disease which makes him unclean and therefore an outcast. Secondly, Naaman is healed through the faithful testimony of his captive Israelite girl, a nonentity in society, and the faithful service of Elisha an Israelite prophet who does not deny him healing because he is not a Jew.

The story shows God's dominion and concern for the non-Jews (gentiles) as well as the Jews, all of whom are to become a part of God's family – an inclusive community. It affirms God's desire to save human beings regardless of their tribe, race, nationality, social status or political affiliation. As Christians, we are reminded to seriously embrace inclusivity and hospitality as we seek to do the mission of God in the face of the Empire. The Christian understanding of society embraces the common good of all. It promotes human rights and inclusive communities by rejecting individualistic demands that deny others the fullness of life.

Jonathan Kangwa, United Church of Zambia



Women's Empowerment

We give thanks to God for the empowerment of women taking place through the work CWM and its member churches.

Militarisation & Conflict

Scripture: Psalm 82:3-5

Reflection

"Around 12:30 PM on 7-3-1966, one bomber plane flew over... and flew around 2/3 times and then flew away ... Around 4:00 PM on 7-3-1966, two jet fighters came and bombarded... village and its surrounding hills. Debris of flying leaves filled the air, the exploding bombs torn tree trunks and broke branches of trees, tearing into pieces. The air-raid was so intense that the whole village was shuddering and trembling as if hit by a series of lightning. The suffering... could not be explained in words." (Untold Story, 1993, p. 60)

Militarisation is an unjust policy giving rise to inhuman acts on the innocent though no Government would turn back the clock in the spirit of metanoia by revoking draconian laws and entrenched structures of violence - complicated, sophisticated and annihilating to perpetuate militarisation and conflict.

"Militarisation of politics and society and the proliferation of authoritarian repressive regimes are the most pressing problems confronting the developing world today... Further the arming and stockpiling of nuclear weapons including manufacturing of nuclear bombs is immoral. Hence the U. N. Treaty on the prohibition of nuclear weapons. Where are the moral lines? Where will the violence and counter violence end?" (Jim Wallis, God's Politics, p. 170) The majority population know nothing.

Verses 3 & 4 of Psalm 82 exhort us, to "Defend the weak and the fatherless; maintain the rights of the poor and oppressed. Rescue the weak and needy; deliver them from the hand of the wicked."

As we read accounts and prevailing ground realities briefly highlighted here, spend a few moments recounting, recapitulating and cataloguing as to how many people - young and old, men and women, bore witness to acts of inhuman atrocities in the putting down of armed rebellion/insurgency against the 'sovereign' State through militarism, militarisation.

But one should be aroused not with hatred against the perpetrators but with compassion and empathy for those who have lost dignity, self - respect, home, livelihood, land, loved ones, hope and freedom, decapitated and many, even precious human lives.

The need of the hour is for committed disciples of Christ to be resolute, steadfast and undaunted in the face of ridicule so that God's uncompromising message is heard, loud and clear.

P.B.M. Basaiawmoit, Presbyterian Church of India

 Prayers**United Church of Zambia**

The United Church of Zambia requests prayers for:

- People displaced by flooding in eastern Zambia.
- For the completion of the United Church offices.
- For the growth of the church especially amongst young people.

Scripture: Psalm 15

Reflection

"Desire of righteousness is preceded by repentance, accompanied by humility and followed by works of mercy."

Gaultier, attributed Day's Collaçon.

In a small rural community of Aotearoa (New Zealand), sits a marae (Māori village). In the corner of the marae nestled into the back drop of the *maunga tapu* (sacred mountain) is the small church house, with wood floors and vintage pews. There is no sign of an altar or images of Jesus Christ, just an old wooden lectern with a single word carved into the edge "Righteous".

One Sunday afternoon three men enter the church. The first walks in with his head bowed, disheveled and somber, he shuffles to a seat at the back of the church. The church begins to fill with people who smile and greet him as they enter, he slowly begins to lift his head, and a smile begins to beam across his face. His name is Repentance.

The second is a local farmer, wearing gumboots and a swandri he enters the church, scans the room for a seat, and finds one on the end of the front pew. As the call to worship begins an elderly woman appears at the door to the church, he stands and walks toward her indicating for her to take his seat. His name is Humility. The first man watches on and makes room for the second man next to him in the back pew.

Suddenly, there is a loud crash at the church entrance and a young man dressed in a suit carrying a box falls to the floor spilling the hymn books across the doorway. His name is Mercy. The first two men are quick to come to his aid and help him to gather the hymn books, he thanks them and begins to distribute them to the congregation.

God desires his people to be righteous, to act with integrity, to speak truth from the heart, to value love for our neighbours and to refrain from idle gossip and prideful arrogance. The story describes three men who come to church seeking to be worthy of God. Each demonstrates a measure of character that reflects righteousness, integrity, truth and love in their own unique, every-day, unassuming ways.

If the Psalm is a guide for living in accordance with the will of God, is it not in the journey to, in seeking to, in aspiring to attain God's many desires for his people that we find our purpose rather than the perfection of Jesus Christ.

Te Aroha Rountree, Ecumenical Partner



Prayers

Presbyterian Church of India

The Presbyterian Church of India invites us to pray for,

- The General Elections in 2019, that the people of India may choose the right people to lead the country and the election will be free and fair.
- Christians in India who experience discrimination, physical torturing and killing, threat and intimidation, obstruction and abuse.
- The continuing growth of the church in India.

Scripture: Hosea 1:2-10; Psalm 85, Genesis 18:20-32,
Psalm 138: Colossians 2:6-15 (16-19); Luke 11:1-13

Reflection

Jesus gives the disciples a lesson as it has been requested, but further he demonstrates the discipline and understanding one must have when approaching God in prayer. First and foremost is to see God as a father, a parent who is willing to provide for his child's needs, and is incompatible with friends who might be irritated by some requests, friends who give into our requests out of our shameless persistence, or fathers who even though evil will not dare to give stones and snakes to their children. They are to pray, trusting and knowing that God is ever available for them. This entails that we ought to pray with faith, knowing that the one we ask is our Father who knows our needs, and cares enough to provide for us.

Jesus points out that earthly fathers regardless of how wicked, have the capacity to give their children good gifts, but nevertheless they cannot be compared to God. God is a loving Father. A Father who gives the Holy Spirit to his children. Jesus shifts from the daily requests of food, forgiveness and comfort, to that of the Holy Spirit. Christopher Maricle, the author of *The Jesus Priorities* argues that, God is willing **to give us what we ask for, only if we ask for the right things**, and Jesus states that **the Holy Spirit is what we ought to ask**.

God is a Father who is willing to give us the Holy Spirit, God's very presence. Beloved, the gift is incompatible with any other gift. The giver is the gift itself. In whatever oppressed and marginalized position we find ourselves in this life, we can turn to God as a parent who above all other gifts, offers Godself.

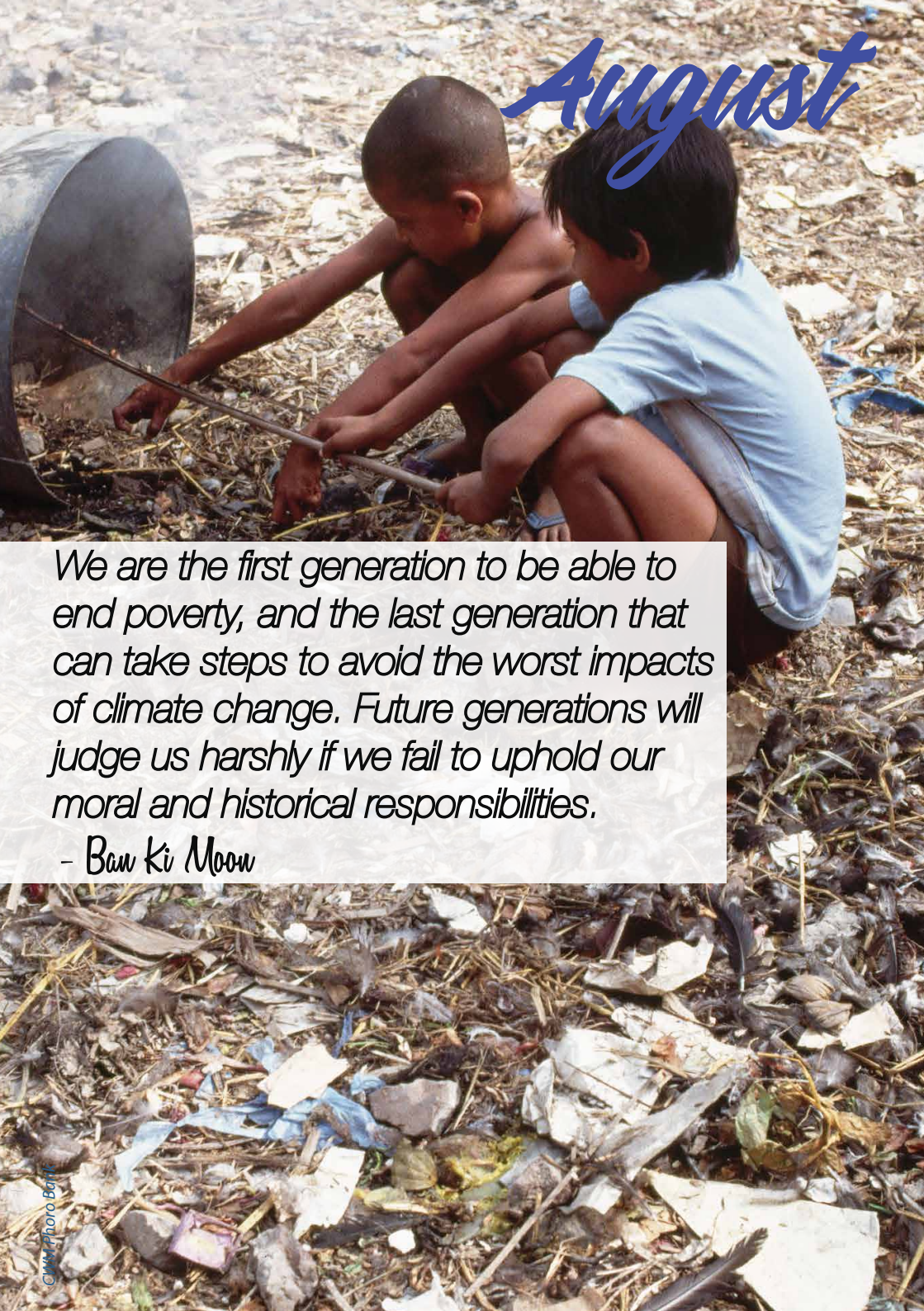
Golebilwe D Mathabatha, Face 2 Face participant



Maohi Protestant Church

We pray for the Maohi Protestant Church, especially

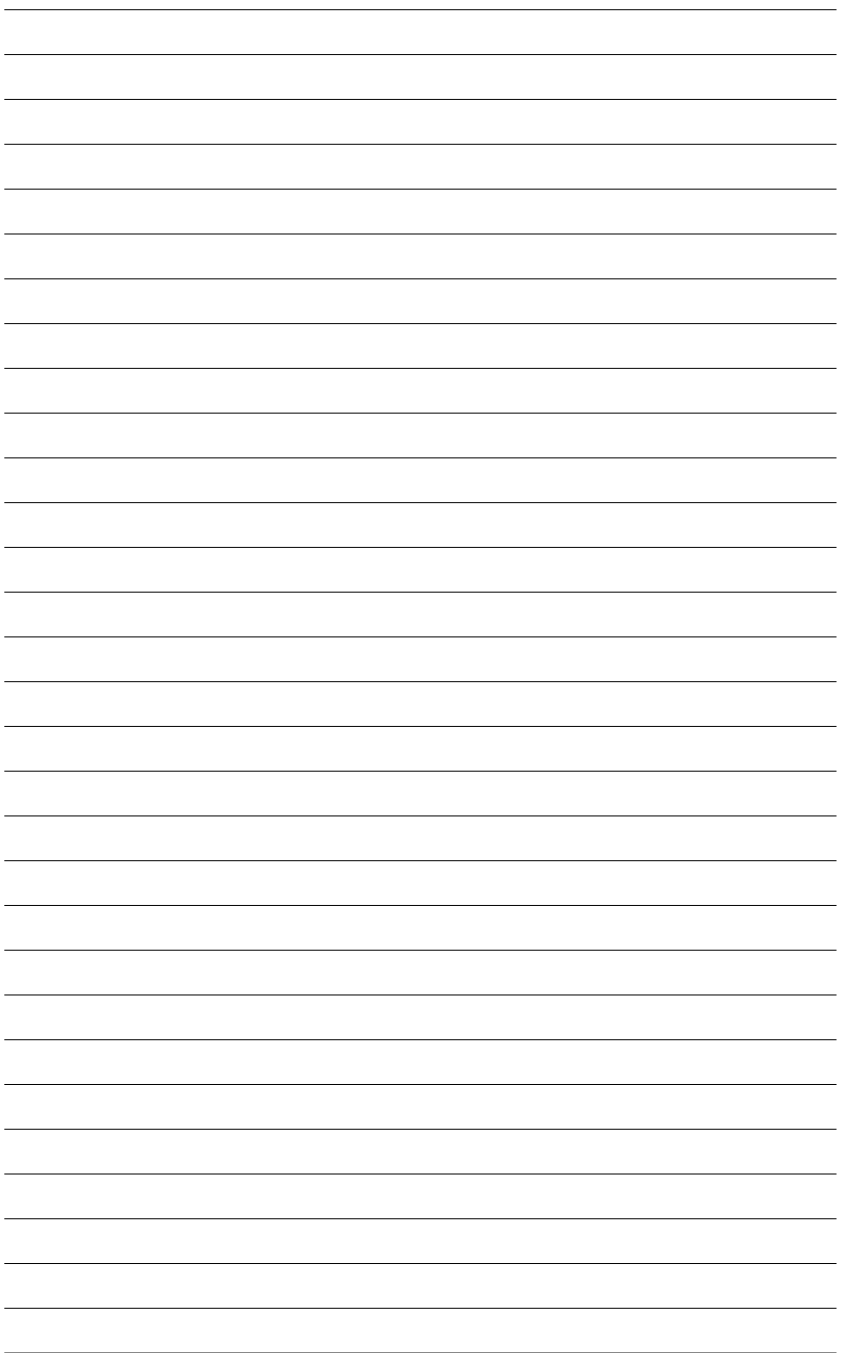
- The education of the children and the young people.
- For families.
- And for the leaders of Māōhi Nui.

A photograph of two young children, a boy and a girl, crouching in a landfill. They are using long sticks to sift through a large pile of trash, which includes plastic bags, cardboard, and other debris. The boy is shirtless, and the girl is wearing a light blue t-shirt. The word "August" is written in a large, blue, cursive font in the top right corner of the image.

August

We are the first generation to be able to end poverty, and the last generation that can take steps to avoid the worst impacts of climate change. Future generations will judge us harshly if we fail to uphold our moral and historical responsibilities.

- Ban Ki Moon



Scripture: Psalm 107:1-9, 43; Colossians 3:1-11

Reflection

Human beings usually think of what happens here on earth as something very important and imagine that life is summed up in what one possesses. But what a spiritual disaster that is! One man who heard Jesus speak of God's control over the material shouted out, asking Jesus to make his brother divide an inheritance. So Jesus warned him, "**Take care!** Be on your guard against all kinds of greed, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of possessions." In other words, Jesus challenged the rich fool to abandon wealth and power.

In everyday life, greed has dominated and leads to injustices. Julian Casablancas, an American musician, says, "Greed is the inventor of injustice as well as the current enforcer." Injustice is part of every society and the victims of injustice are invariably the many people who are poor. Psalm 107:1-9 portrays God as having special concern for the poor, downtrodden, and the oppressed. In Psalm 4, God was needed to be recognized as the "God of Justice," for there was much discrimination against the poor. God's justice aims at creating an egalitarian community in which all classes of people maintain one's basic human rights. For in one's daily life, the warfare of the spirit is the struggle for justice at every level of human existence.

Thus, Colossians 3:1-12 reminds about life in Christ. So, by following Christ' instructions, it is good to share one's resources especially the rich to the poorest. The fact is in a materialistic world, human beings tend to hoard rather than resources. One of the factors that lead to poverty is the unequal distribution of wealth. Let us make this world a better place to live in by sharing one's resources with the other.

Pancilia Thaumuit, Academic Accompaniment Programme participant



Youth Programmes

We pray for the youth programmes which will take place over the summer months in the Regions of CWM.

Scripture: Isaiah 1:1, 10-20

Reflection

Sunday morning worship has become a smorgasbord of choices. Some services are steeped in tradition and others are categorically contemporary. Some are shaped by a 'social gospel' while others stress conversion to the neglect of discipleship. In between is a variety of worship and missional understandings which offer options to the seeker no matter how discerning or fastidious.

In today's reading the leadership and people are judged harshly for elaborate sacrifices and acts of worship. It is not the gathered community's outward expressions of worship which are criticized, it is the inconsistency of proclamation and practice. The nation is condemned for acts of commission and omission.

"...remove the evil of your doings...; cease to do evil, learn to do good..." (vv16b,17a)

The leadership and people have not heard or have neglected to respond to the cries of those who suffer injustice and have obviously also acted unjustly. All this, while trying to 'butter up' God or, as would be said in Jamaica, 'grease God's palm', by offering sacrifice.

Is there a redemptive word from Isaiah? Praise God, yes there is!

Isaiah not only points to the subjects of the offences but also to the targets for remedial action (v. 17) Where is there injustice? Where is life being denied rather than affirmed? We must go to it. Where are we as the Body of Christ complicit or actively involved in perpetuating injustice? We must turn from it.

We celebrate God who desires and passionately pursues relationship. Hear God's invitation, *"Come now, let us reason[c] together..."* (v. 18). God calls us to set things right and offers us a way of repentance and transformation.

How does Isaiah challenge us? J. Clinton McCann, Jr. Evangelical Professor of Biblical Interpretation says it right: "What makes worship acceptable to God is not the motions we perform in the sanctuary, but the mission we pursue in the world."

CWM invites us to engage in life-giving worship which is all of life and alert to the needs and struggles of the most vulnerable. How will we respond?

Karen Francis, CWM Mission Secretary Caribbean Region

Prayers

Presbyterian Church in Taiwan

We pray for the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan and especially:

- The church's ministry to senior citizens in the church and wider community.
- The Taiwan Ecumenical Forum for Justice and Peace.
- Disaster preparedness and response in the face of typhoons and earthquakes.

18 Aug

Militarisation & Conflict

Scripture: Luke 12:49-56

Reflection

The Lord Jesus Christ reveals his true mission on earth, which is to bring God's word in the world represented in fire and his baptism. Both elements of fire and baptism compel recognition of our offences and misdeeds over others. Moreover, the fire and baptism of Christ foster the individual and communal transformation and give birth to communities based on equity and integrity.

This world is strongly affected by violence, war and hatred. In my contextual part of the world we see and experience the beauty of our creation and diverse societies ruined at the expense of domination, militarization and profit. The message of Jesus the Christ is very much relevant to our situations today. We need to bring the awareness of God's redeeming word through his love in our Lord Jesus Christ. It is the redeeming and accompanying love of God through Jesus of Nazareth that aims to bring us into equitable relationships and integrity, which must pave and establish the ways and manners in which we live and move and have our being in God's world which is torn asunder by the human and ungodly tendencies toward the things that negate and work against life and its fullness as declared BY Jesus.

Marc Pohue, Māōhi Protestant Church



Churches of Christ in Malawi

We pray that the church may be prophetic in the context of the economic challenges of Malawi. As pray for the church as it addresses the gender imbalance in the ordained ministry as they train and ordain women.

Repairer of Breaches

Scripture: Isaiah 58:9b-14

Reflection

“Your ancient ruins shall be rebuilt;
 you shall raise up the foundations of many generations;
 you shall be called the repairer of the breach,
 the restorer of streets to live in.”
 Isaiah 58:12 (NRSV)

The book of the Prophet Isaiah was written in order to confront his own nation, and perhaps other contemporary nations with the word of the Lord regarding their sins, and the coming judgment of God. Isaiah's visions and prophecies provides; hope of the future restoration from captivity, redemption by the grace of God to be the light to other Gentile nations and a Davidic Messiah to bring salvation for God's people by the Old and New covenants. Isaiah prophesied both Judgment and Salvation of God.

Today we as God's people are reminded of both the judgment and salvation of God, constantly and very often through the consequences of our own doings. Our text provides a prophetic hope of God's salvation of what “shall” happen in due time. “Your ancient ruins shall be rebuilt,” what has been ruin in our world can and will be rebuilt, and restored. Like the things that changed our climate that threatened our nations, can and will be restored. The Scripture says “you shall raise up the foundations of many generations,” we are chosen to give light into today's imperial darkness, to raise up others together against to work of today's empire that threaten our very existence. “You shall be called the repairer of the breach, the restorer of streets to live in.”

There are many breaches, and discrepancies within our own imperial context, the handiworks of the empire. It is up to us to make amend, and stand up as “The Repairer of Breaches” especially on Climate Change pandemic.

Jezza Agadio, Pastor, Nauru Congregational Church

**Theology Students**

We pray for students taking theological and leadership courses through CWM Academic Accompaniment Programme.

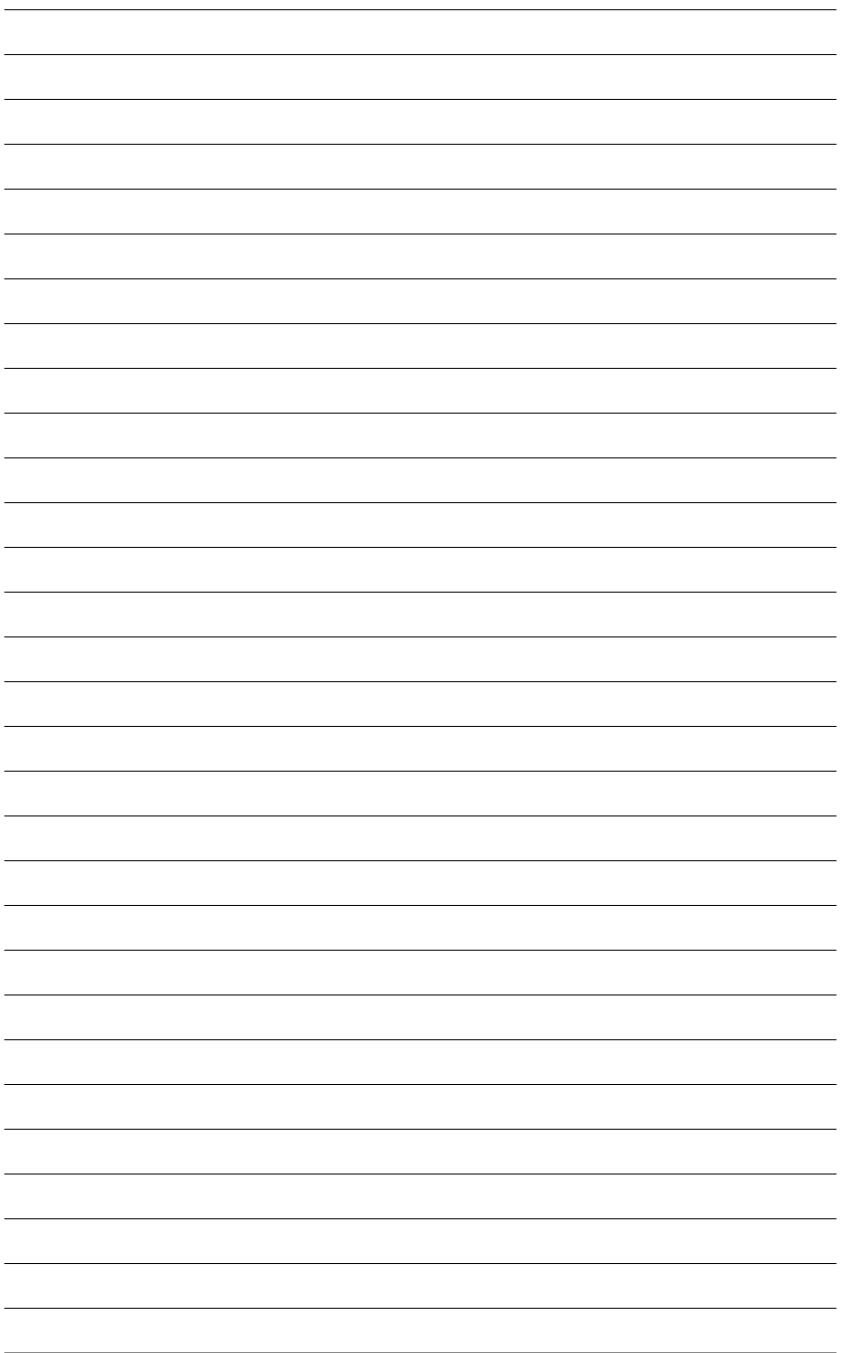


*Those who love peace must
learn to organize as effectively
as those who love war.*

- Martin Luther King Jr.



September



Scripture: Jeremiah 2:4-13

Reflection

Today's reading shares a "moment of truth" with the clans of Israel. As I read this passage the realization dawned on me that Jeremiah's words still ring true to today's realities. What will be the inheritance of the future generations?

Jeremiah expresses that God gave a fertile and fruitful earth to all humanity, a prosperous inheritance for God's children to care for. He highlights the mindset of the people, like the mindset some of us have towards life and God's blessings of creation; that which we often take for granted. God's glory in the form of creation is traded daily for "worthless idols" (v11) in the form of money and dominion.

Everyday we trade the blessing of creation for self-gain and profit. Laws and policies have been created and set in place to endorse globalization and its aura of greed. The fertile land we have been given, now has pockets of a "detestable inheritance" (v7). In parts of the world, land is too dry to be cultivated; soil has eroded and is unable to give nutrients for seeds to grow.

What will be the inheritance of the earth for the future generation? All of God's creation is affected by the decisions and choices that we make for humanity, for other people. For some reason we tend to leave out the other members of creation. As the effects and impact of climate change increases, the realization forms that we will not suffer severely from our greed and elation of money over creation, it is future that will suffer...the future of all creation. In God's mission for all creation, will we continue to squander and abuse our inheritance, or will we finally begin to appreciate its worth?

Renita Barnes, The United Church in Jamaica and the Cayman Islands



Presbyterian Church of Myanmar

The Presbyterian Church of Myanmar requests prayer for the church's Healing Departments of Agape Hospital ministry. The hospital needs full-time doctors and nurses who can fully work in the Hospital. In addition, please pray for the procurement of a new X-ray machine and oxygen machine.

Human Trafficking

Scripture: Genesis 37:26-28, Leviticus 25:44-46, 1 Timothy 6:1-2

Reflection

Human trafficking is the new term for slavery. There are new forms of indentured labor in the world today ranging from Eastern Europeans held captives by European gang masters, Nepalis and Bangladeshis recruited to build football stadiums in Qatar, Filipino and Indian nannies forced to work in households of rich Mediterranean Arabs. Human trafficking has become a fastest growing criminal activity and a lucrative one too.

Human trafficking is old as the Bible. Probably, one of the persons who was trafficked early was Joseph. Like so many present day trafficking victims, it was his own family who sold Joseph. The fact that there were Midianite merchants who were prepared to buy and to be sold in Egypt (Genesis 37:26–28) itself an indication that trading in people was already prevalent in the ancient times. Tragically, it was Joseph's own descendants who ended up oppressed as slaves in the very country where he himself was sold by his brothers. Their experience of enslavement, their forced labour with its ferocious violence and mistreatment, has many modern day matches and examples. Modi's India is full of bonded laborers who are still making bricks and match sticks under severe conditions with minimum or no pay.

The Bible's treatment of human enslavement is a complicated one. It has passages which sanction slavery such as Leviticus 25:44-46 and 1 Timothy 6:1-2. In dealing with these texts, we need to keep in mind two factors. One, these pro- human seizure passages have to be read in the cultural contexts in which they emerged. Two, these seemingly approval passages have been considered in the light of wider Biblical teachings and ideas, especially the biblical notion of all human beings are created in the image of God and each one has a profound human dignity and has the liberative potential as explicated in the Nazareth Manifesto of Jesus. Freedom and redemption are at the very core of the Scripture, a message which followers of Jesus are asked to uphold and propagate.

As Christians we can do a number of things to eradicate human trafficking. One is to remind ourselves that we need to reprise our role as prophets and speak on behalf of those who cannot speak for themselves: "defend the rights of the poor and needy." Proverbs 31.8-9. Secondly, we must actively join hands with organizations such as Anti-Slavery International or the International Justice Mission which are energetically involved in offering help to those facing this modern bondage. Finally, we can offer support to organizations like Fair Trade which are involved in eradicating unfair labor practices which still prevail in coffee, tea, cocoa plantations. A special concern of mine is the Jasmine flower pickers in Madurai area who work in Dickensian conditions.

Vedha Kani, Woman of Faith

**United Church in Papua New Guinea**

Give thanks for the courage the UCPNG shows in standing up for people and communities who are being and will be grossly and negatively affected by Seabed Mining. Pray for the church as they continue to speak the prophetic voice into contexts of empire through global mining TNCs.

Worship and Discipleship

Scripture: Jeremiah 4:11-12, 22-28; Exodus 32:7-14; Psalm 14;
Psalm 51:1-10; 1 Timothy 1:12-17; Luke 15:1-10

Reflection

Attending Mass one Sunday with my wife who is Roman Catholic, I heard the priest say, as his words of sending forth, “the Mass has ended and only just begun.” Worship is both our gathering as redeemed sinners, responding to God’s mercy and grace in confession, praise, prayer, sacrament and discipleship; as well as our going out into the world as apostles, to witness God’s mercy and grace through our lives as the Body of Christ.

The Old Testament readings invite us to reflect on God’s judgement and the opportunities for renewal: from misguided worship based on a patron-client understanding of their relationship with God by the Israelites (see Ex 32:1-6) to foolish and unjust lifestyles that betray our covenant with God, and our relationship with one another and God’s creation. Yet despite of this judgement God still offers fresh hope for renewal and regeneration as we reflect on our sins and seek a clean heart and righteous spirit so that we can joyfully worship and give thanks for our salvation.

The New Testament Epistle and Gospel readings remind us that the journey of discipleship begins while we were still sinners. Paul, then Saul, was “a blasphemer, a persecutor, and a man of violence. But I received mercy because I had acted ignorantly in unbelief, and the grace of our Lord overflowed for me with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus.” (1Tim13-14). We are the lost sheep, found and carried back on the shoulders of the shepherd. We are the lost coin, hunted for and found by the woman. We are also called to be the shepherd and the woman — seeking that which is lost among us and rejoicing with God and the Body of Christ when that which has been lost is found and returned.

James Bhagwan, Ecumenist



Ecumenical Partners

CWM give thanks for its many areas of co-operation with ecumenical partners.

Scripture: Jeremiah 8:18-9:1; Psalm 79:1-9; Amos 8:4-7;
Psalm 113; 1 Timothy 2:1-7; **Luke 16:1-13**

Reflection

The other day the television channels in India were busy discussing and deliberating, with awe and part disbelief, the features and cost of probably the costliest mobile phone handset in the world – Falcon Supernova iPhone 6 Pink Diamond – owned by a lady who belonged to a super-rich family. Yet out in the world there were millions and millions who had not eaten even one meal that whole day. And a poor helpless mother sold her child for a little sum. In the gospel according to St Matthew, when Jesus was telling what the kingdom of heaven would be like, he narrated the parable of the Workers in the Vineyard, where the owner of the vineyard wanted to give the man who was hired last the same as he gave to the one hired first. On the one hand he used his right to do with his own money whatever he wanted to, yet on the other, he set an example for those who own the resources, to ensure that the needs of those who depend on such resources are also met at least to the minimum. That paves the way to put in place the moral principles for building economic institutions, the ultimate goal of which is to create an opportunity for each person to create a sufficient material foundation to ensure a dignified, productive, and creative life for all.

Significant natural resources like land, water, forest and minerals, existing freely in nature for human use, day by day are being increasingly controlled, exploited and looted by powerful few. The Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations is predicting that by 2025, 1.8 billion people will be living in countries or regions with absolute water scarcity. According to a new UN report, the amount of the planet's natural resources extracted for human use has tripled in 40 years. Countries have been devastated by warfare due primarily to predatory governing elites using their control over the resources to enrich themselves.

Reports say that the rich are getting richer and the poor poorer. According to a report by Merrill Lynch and Capgemini, summarized in The Guardian, High Net Worth Individuals (HNWI), defined as those with more than \$1 million in free cash, have enjoyed a 10 percent increase in their wealth in recent years. Nearly 1/2 of the world's population — more than 3 billion people — live on less than \$2.50 a day. More than 1.3 billion live in extreme poverty — less than \$1.25 a day. 1 billion children worldwide are living in poverty.

In the book of Amos, God strongly rebukes the Israelites for the economic injustice in their midst, saying that they oppressed the poor and crushed the needy (Amos 4:1).

Alwan Masih, General Secretary, Church of North India synod

22 Sep

Economic Justice



A New Face

We pray for the CWM “A New Face” programme which gives an opportunity for new ministers and church leaders to explore mission together in an international community and new context.

Scripture: Lamentations 1:1-6

Reflection

Sometimes we forget that God is not angry with us if we pour out our heart-felt grief and anger to him. Sometimes, that grief and anger may even be directed at him – and still he won't be angry with us. How do we know this? One reason is the presence of books like Lamentations in our Bible. This book is not hidden away in a corner, as if the Bible editors were embarrassed by its presence. It holds out hope and trust in God, but those were desperate times, and the hope and trust at the end were clung to desperately (5:19-22).

Then there is Ecclesiastes; another book in our Bible, and full of weariness and doubt. Don't forget Job; a long book in our Bible, and riddled with pain and anger at God. Neither of these is tucked away out of sight. And then the Psalms; a towering book in the Bible, with a dominant presence in the New Testament, our sung and spoken worship, our personal devotional lives, and our counselling of one another.

Although we commonly think of Psalms as a book of praises, the single most common type of Psalm is the lament. Depending on how you categorise the Psalms, including sections within the Psalms, somewhere between one third and half of them consists of individual or communal laments. Of course, many of them move towards renewed trust and confidence in God, but only after real honesty with him during traumas.

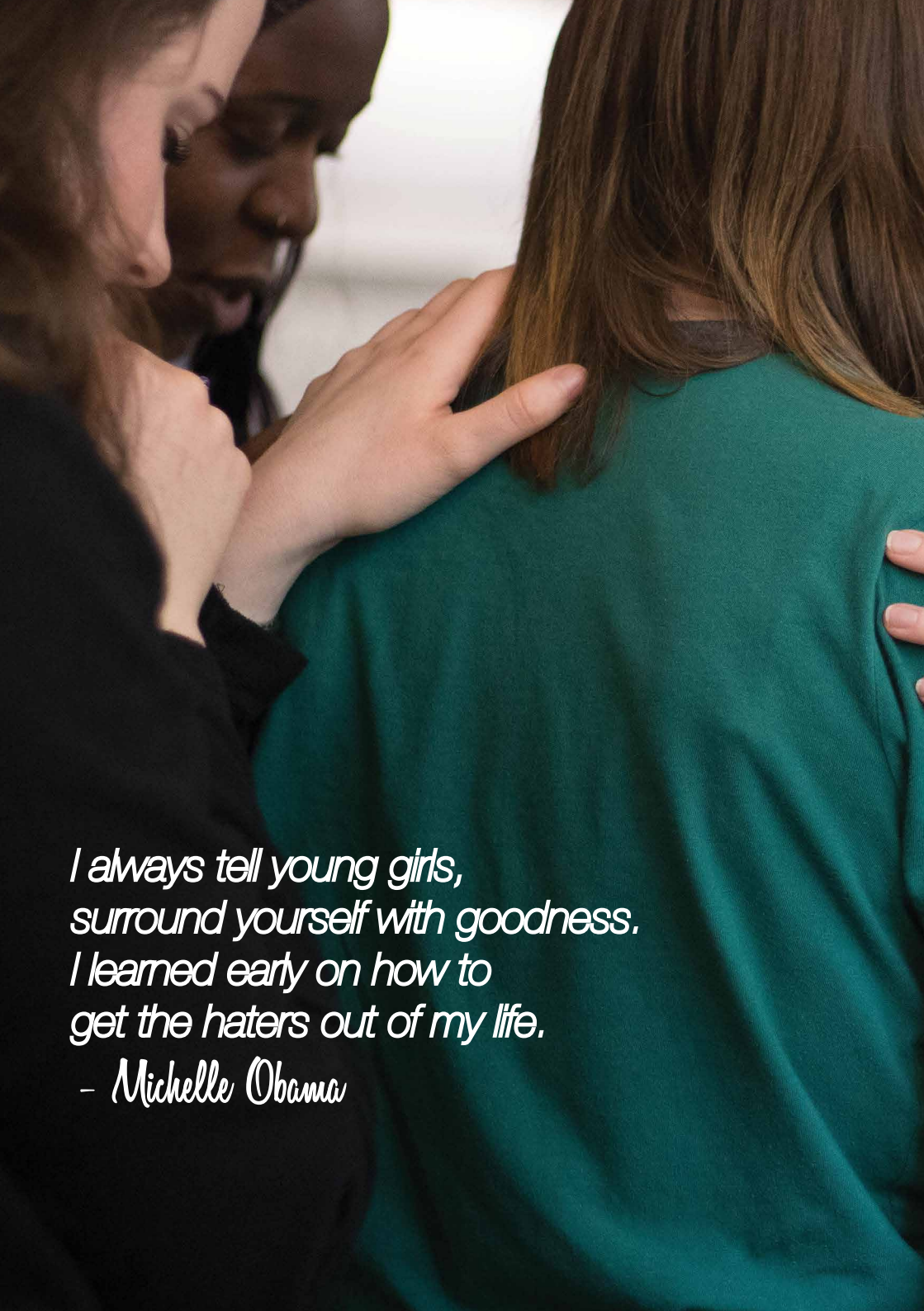
Lamentations, and these other books, confirm to us that our anxieties, doubts, sense of loss and grief, even a sense of anger at what God seems to have allowed in our lives, have a place within our journey of faith and worship of God. He is with us in all of it – and he understands.

Walter Riggans, Congregational Federation



Church of Jesus Christ in Madagascar

The Church of Jesus Christ in Madagascar prays that the church may live out the Gospel in everyday life of the Christians within the Malagasy society.

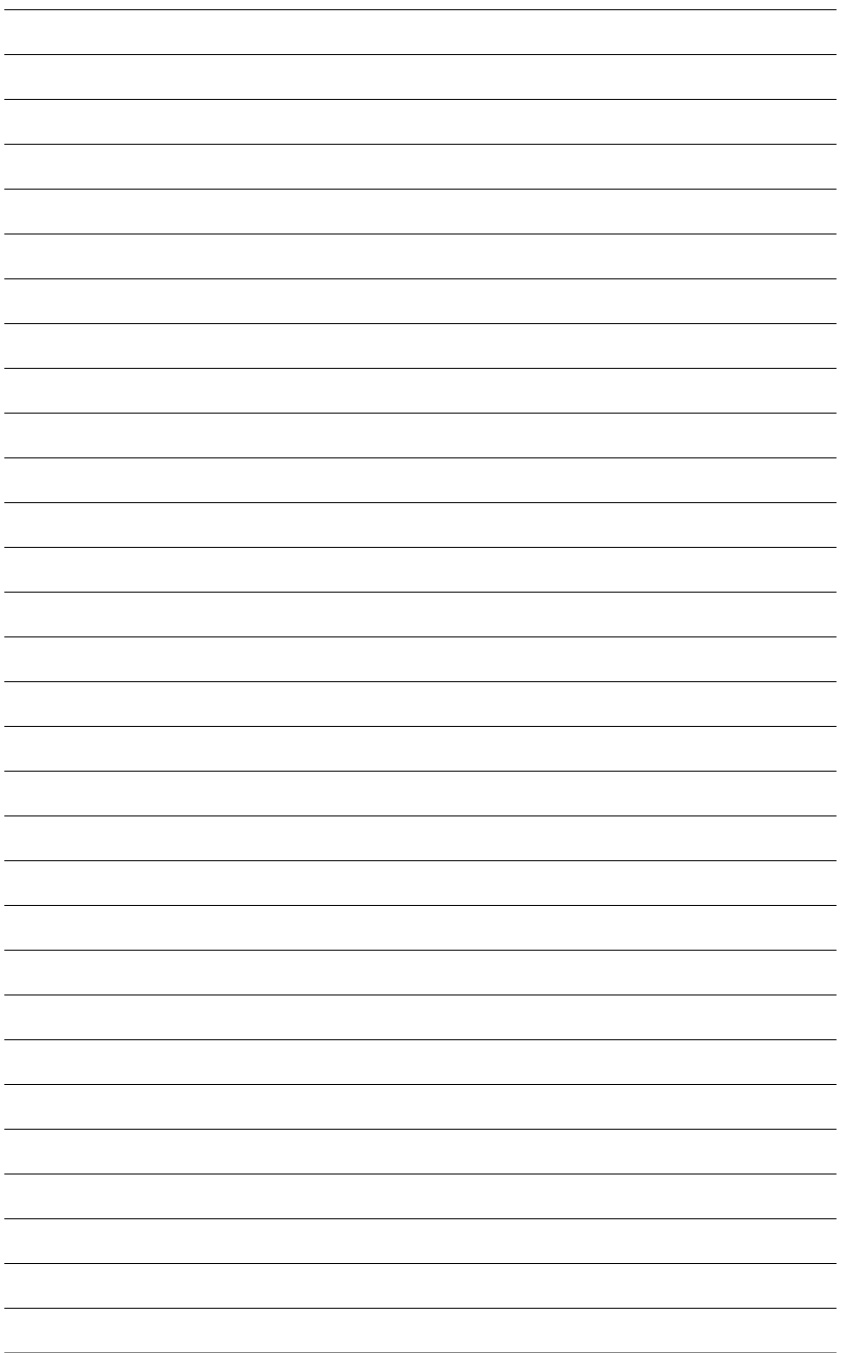


*I always tell young girls,
surround yourself with goodness.
I learned early on how to
get the haters out of my life.*

- Michelle Obama

October





Scripture: Psalm 137

Reflection

While there are other renditions, I grew up bobbing my head to Boney M's reggae version of "Rivers of Babylon" (1978) thinking it was a happy song. Its chart-topping rhythm and hypnotic melody had completely blinded me from the sad realities behind the writing of the song or even the Psalms that inspired it (Ps 137 & 19). Learning of Psalm 137 as an adult, I came to the sobering realization that the song is one of terror, vividly describing the injustices that occurred during the Babylonian captivity. Moreover, my introduction to the psalm was climaxed by a disturbing image of Israelite babies being pummelled to death with a rock (vs. 9). The scene that is so horrific that its omission from all versions of the reggae song is not surprising.

The Babylonian river was a site of oppression and ridicule drenched in the tears of the helpless. This river is as relevant today as it was during the time of the psalmist. Through oppressive systems and imperial expansion, such rivers continue to flow into our societies infiltrating families, immigrant communities and especially our young. Human trafficking is wicked and is a sin that must be renounced. Like the psalmist, we Christians assume our place at the river banks, crying out for justice as our futures are being stolen.

Questions for reflection: As consumers of the entertainment empire, have our views of popular beauty been deeply affected? In what ways can we stop immoral industries from commoditizing love, beauty, labour and romance?

Fa'afetai Aiava, Congregational Christian Church in Samoa (Pacific Theological College)

Prayers

Nauru Congregational Church

Please pray with the Nauru Congregational Church:

- For the spiritual revival of the church to transform and inspire God's People, to walk in the light and love of God's Mission.
- For the church as it develops a new church database website.
- For the Mission Enabler who will work to provide Missional programmes for the poor, excluded, among people with Disabilities and the significant issue of climate justice.

Scripture: Psalm 66:1-9; 2 Kings 5:1-3; Luke 17:11-19

Reflection

As with the rescuing and redeeming of the Israelites God continues to show compassion to people in crisis anywhere (Ps 66:5). God heals Naaman a non-Israelite army-leader through an insignificant young slave-girl and prophet Elisha (2 Kings 5:1-3). Luke tells of ten persons who had leprosy. It does not matter whether they were Jew or Samaritan. As lepers they were sinners and outcasts. Jesus sees their need and asks them to show themselves to the priests and get clearance to join the society. On their way, they find themselves healed. However, only one of the ten returns to Jesus to thank him, and he is a Samaritan. According to Jesus it is the faith of the Samaritan – a non-Jew – which makes him well. His faith and his trust in Jesus for healing once again make him become member of the wider community of followers of Jesus.

Hearing the all-inclusive good-news of Jesus, our perspectives and concepts of 'God' and 'family' have enlarged from Island-wide to universal. Yet, it is mainly during crises such as tsunami and earthquake that we find people of different faiths living together in the same camp and striving together for food, clothes, shelter and other urgent needs. How active is our day-to-day interfaith relations and witness for ecumenism, especially as modern transport and communication systems bring us closer into one big multi-religious community? Why do we not accommodate more of the insights and ideas from the so-called "junior" members of our communities, and of members of other faiths in our societies? We are called today to revive our faith in the God of all cultures and to cultivate and nurture friendship with neighbors of other faiths and to live in gratitude and humility.

Donald Samuel, Church of North India (Pacific Theological College)



Leadership

Please pray for the CWM and its leadership, especially the General Secretary, Moderator and Board of Directors.

Scripture: Genesis 32:22-32

Reflection

The text introduces us to the family of Jacob (two wives, two maids, and eleven sons). The family was to cross the ford of Jabbok. However, the writer of the text (where we read), does not tell the readers where they were going, where they were coming from and why they left the place, especially with all their belongings. The reading of verses 1-21 suggests he was going to make peace with his brother Esau. '...a journey of seeking peace...'

The text, indeed the whole book of Genesis, provides us with the following reflections:

- It traces the interaction between God and humankind and how the mission of God breaks into human history and experience. God meets his people in point of need.
- It introduces the land issue as part of God's salvation plan before politics were institutionalized – land as a place where blessing or justice is attained.
- Lessing or justice is never cheap. It comes as a result of struggle (wrestling). The word 'wrestle' suggests that it is not negotiated. In the process, some are injured, but the injury is no match for the resultant blessing.
- In the context of struggle (wrestling), God needs to be named and the place of the struggle needs to be named too. All these must be reflective of realities of the struggling community. The naming of God and the land of justice/blessing is relational to the experiences of the community of faith
- Finally, a tradition (theology) is born. It is always taken as a constant reminder of where the people are coming from

Sindiso Jele, CWM Mission Secretary African Region



Hearing God's Cry

We pray for CWM member churches who are taking part in the Hearing God's Cry programme that they may discern and discover where God is calling to them to engage in mission in new ways in their contexts.

Scripture: Joel 2:23-32

Reflection

Like many tribal people of the world, natural cycles or seasons are important points of references for life supporting benefits. Main point of emphasis is that climate change should be viewed in terms of its impacts on life support systems. It is not a punishment from God.

Climate Change exhibiting abnormal or extreme seasonality and energy streams is affecting people and creation, and yet natural changes in climate maintains is necessary and important for;

- (a) Refreshing and Replenishment
- (b) Building and Rebuilding
- (c) Forming and Reforming.
- (d) Planting and Harvesting

Abuse and irresponsibility driven by greed and arrogance misses the mark of our divine calling as stewards. Climate change is therefore not a punishment from God but a consequence of human abuse, greed and arrogance.

Let us now look at the text for today, **Joel 2: 23-32**, refreshing and replenishing the earth for the sake of the Creation and Humanity. It is the idea of a life supporting rain to replenish the earth. Holy Spirit is the Refreshing and Replenishment we need. Holy Spirit is the forming and reforming agent we need.

The Holy Spirit refreshes Humanity and creation. A refreshing rain, streams of life supporting energy supporting life bearing fruits of the Holy Spirit where instead of greed, there is kindness, generosity and self-control. We pray that there will be a refreshing acceptance of our responsibility to care for creation.

Conclusion

Give ourselves time to reflect on our life styles and socio-economic models. Advocate for better ways of living. We should come to a realization that we are being displaced and needed God's mercy and grace for adaptation.

Bena Seta, Lay Preacher & Evangelist, United Church in Papua New Guinea

 *Prayers***Presbyterian Church of Korea**

Pray for peace and reunification of the Korean Peninsula. Pray that the Christian churches to be a strong sign of solidarity and spiritual accompaniment for the people of North and South Korea. Pray that the PCK continues to develop and accomplish its mission to fulfill its duties as a servant of God through its long-term plan "Ecumenical Decade of Life-Community Movement for Healing and Reconciling" (2012 - 2022).

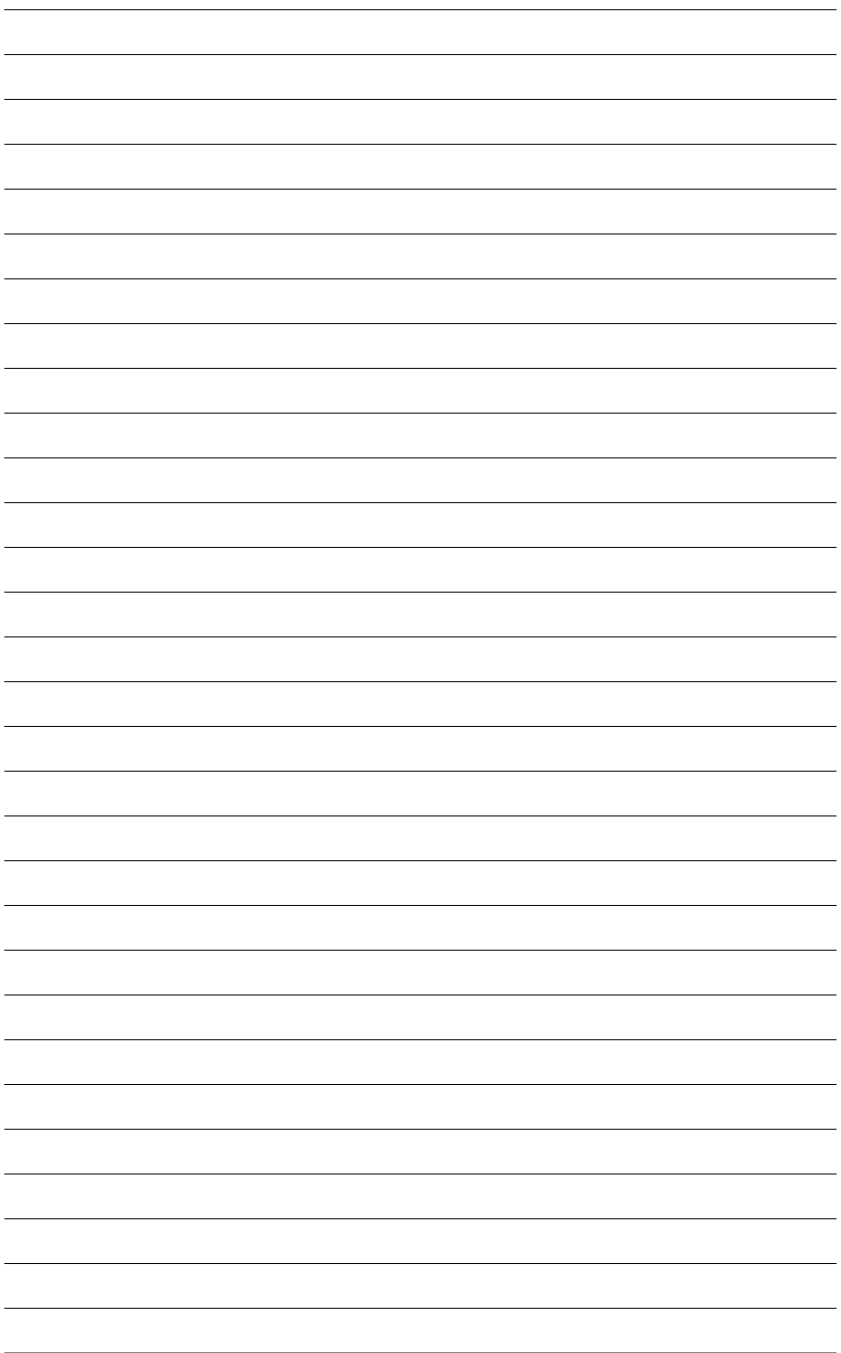
A photograph of a person in a slum, seen from behind, carrying a white box on their head. They are wearing a dark tank top and a yellow and brown patterned wrap. They are walking on a dirt path that leads into a dense area of makeshift shacks with corrugated metal roofs. In the background, a utility pole with power lines and a solar street light are visible against a blue sky with scattered white clouds. Other people are walking further down the path.

*However long the night,
the dawn will break.*
- African Proverb

November



Cox's Bazar Rohingya Refugees Camp (Bangladesh, 2018)



Scripture: Luke 19:1-10

Reflection

Often when we read this story we tend to get caught up in the image of Zacchaeus (meaning 'pure, innocent') in the tree and Jesus calling him. But there is much more to discover. This story of exclusion and inclusion takes place in a time when the Romans were in power. The Roman empire was big and to pay the high costs of (among other things) their armies, taxes had to be collected. Zacchaeus was a Jew working for the Romans and in his tax collector work he had a high position. It seems that he was chasing money and power. Although economically he was doing well, he was excluded from his community. What is our definition of 'life in abundance'? (John 10:10) Is it the Romans who provide this or ...?

When Jesus comes to his town, Zacchaeus is excluded in a very literal way (verse 3). It is Jesus who is crossing boundaries and breaking the 'walls' of distinction created by humans. When Jesus turns towards Zacchaeus and invites himself into his house, the crowd is not happy and blame him for sharing a meal with this 'sinner'. As a part of the crowd it is so easy to judge others.

It is striking that no words of repentance are being spoken before Jesus enters his home. The presence of Jesus makes Zacchaeus want to change his life and pay a 'reparation' in the process of reconciliation with his community. Jesus proclaims salvation and restores Zacchaeus' membership of the community by calling him a 'son of Abraham'. The community might need more time to welcome him again in their midst. More time, more dialogue, more time to believe that he has changed and there won't be a repetition.

But they are challenged to practice mercy and forgiveness to someone who was excluded. Showing mercy is an indispensable attitude in a process of reconciliation. We encounter it in many stories in the bible (Saul and Ananias, the prodigal son etc.). It is a value that the church has to offer a broken world where dehumanizing others seems to be the new standard. How do we look at people at the margins of (or excluded from) our own community?

Inge Landman, Protestant Church in the Netherlands



Missional Congregations

We give thanks for the 50,000 local congregations that make up the member churches of CWM and pray that each local congregation become a community of faith that shares the fullness of life we find in Christ Jesus.

Climate Change

Scripture: Psalm 98

Reflection

Psalm 98 is one of the many Psalms of praise to God Almighty who has done marvellous things towards the whole universe in general and towards His people in particular because His steadfast love and faithfulness never fail. He who "looked at what He had done and saw that it was good," in the beginning (see Gen 1), has always wanted to keep it that way. But unfortunately, humankind has spoilt God's creation...

Nevertheless, only those who believe in God can understand this and can expect great things from Him.

The psalmist has invited the House of Israel to celebrate and sing praises, to make joyful noises with musical instruments which were used in his time. This can still happen today and tomorrow with God's people.

That is why today, we are also called to acknowledge the lordship of GOD almighty over the nations and the whole creation - despite the powers around us which appear to deny such a statement: Mammon's power, corruption, injustice, inequality of treatment almost everywhere, discrimination of all sorts, increasing poverty and so on....

As we experience everywhere today the effects of climate change which is after all a phenomenon caused by humanity, we are invited to look up at our God and Lord, the only One from whom comes our salvation.

As human beings, we are unable to control many things around us but God is in control whether we recognize it or not. The Lord is waiting for us to turn to Him. He deserves praise and thanksgiving for all that He has done and is doing.

Read again Psalm 98: God is working miracles in our human eyes. We cannot but recognize humbly His might and deeds. With the prophet Micah, He has told us what is right and what He demands: "See that justice is done, let mercy be your first concern, and humbly obey your God". (Micah 6.8)

Yvette Rabemila, Church of Jesus Christ Madagascar

**Directors**

Please pray for the CWM Board of Directors who meet this week that they may know God's wisdom and blessing on their discussions.

Scripture: Isaiah 65:17-25

Reflection

A glorious prophecy of hope – a dream which we hardly dare believe – a vision of a world so far removed from our small, narrow, myopic and biased current world view.

Isaiah dares to dream and to believe that God is still at work, still creating, still building a world where weeping and exploitation are things of the past. This is a clear vision of the world as it ought to be, as God intends and wills it to be. A world where weeping, distress, child mortality, homelessness, hunger etc are things of the past and long forgotten!

We hear a loud challenge to the structures and systems which cause and deepen endemic poverty and injustice, for example climate change, tax avoidance, unfair trading systems. A challenge to the churches and us as individuals to look again at our own structures, at our own investment funds, our own pension schemes, our own individual spending patterns to see where we can make positive changes and become agents of change to build God's kingdom on his earth. God's kingdom of beauty and wholeness. God's family of love and justice.

Look carefully at the verbs which describe God at work – 'creating (new heavens and a new earth), rejoicing (in Jerusalem), delighting (in my people), answering (before they call!) hearing (before they speak!). How proactive God is!!

And then consider the verbs which should describe our human work and response – be glad, rejoice, build, inhabit, plant, eat, enjoy, be blessed, call, speak. Gladness, rejoicing, enjoyment, blessing are all traits of people called by God, inspired by God, on fire for God – builders and inhabitants of his kingdom.

May God bless us and continually inspire us to a strong faith and commitment in his vision and desire for the world. May we truly be builders of his kingdom!

Anna Jane Evans, Presbyterian Church of Wales



Capacity Development

We pray for CWM's work to equip and build the capacity of members to engage in God's mission.

Scripture: Jeremiah 23:1-6; Psalm 46; Colossians 1:11-20; Luke 23:33-43

Reflection

This Psalm encourages us to hope and trust in God; in His power and providence, and His gracious presence with His church in worst times.

God the Refuge of His People (Psalm. 46: 1-3)

The Psalm begins with an affirmation that God is our “refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.” It shows that God is our help in whatever circumstance that we find ourselves in. In this lifetime we may face many challenges like loss, grief, and shattered dreams. Yet these are not signs that God is not with us. As our refuge, God provides us with a firm foundation on which we can stand and walk in our lives. He is always there for us no matter where we are.

God the Protector of His People (46: 4-7)

The Psalm moves into a point at which the Psalmist talks about conflict and challenge. He evokes an image of the moving and shaking of the earth to illustrate the point that God is there in the midst of our challenges. Even if we feel that the earth is about to end and we fall into despair, God is there to pick up us again and give us comfort.

God the Sovereign of the World (46: 8-11)

As the Psalmist paints the image of war and desolation in the world, he shows the steadfast nature of God's love for people. God protects them from all harm. God is in control of all situations. God is in control and He wants us to know that He is there in midst of all our hurt, struggle, and pain that we experience in life. He asked us to “Be still” (46:9). This “Be still,” is a call to stop our own violence or conflict and trust completely in God's ways.

Gifta Angeline Kumar, Academic Accompaniment Programme participant



United Church in the Solomon Islands

Pray for the UCSI:

- Leaders to work in partnership and collaboration with each other at all levels.
- For the proper and continuing implementation of its Strategic Development Plan (SDP).
- For the church as a whole as it seeks to discern and respond to the call of God in the various local contexts and nationally.

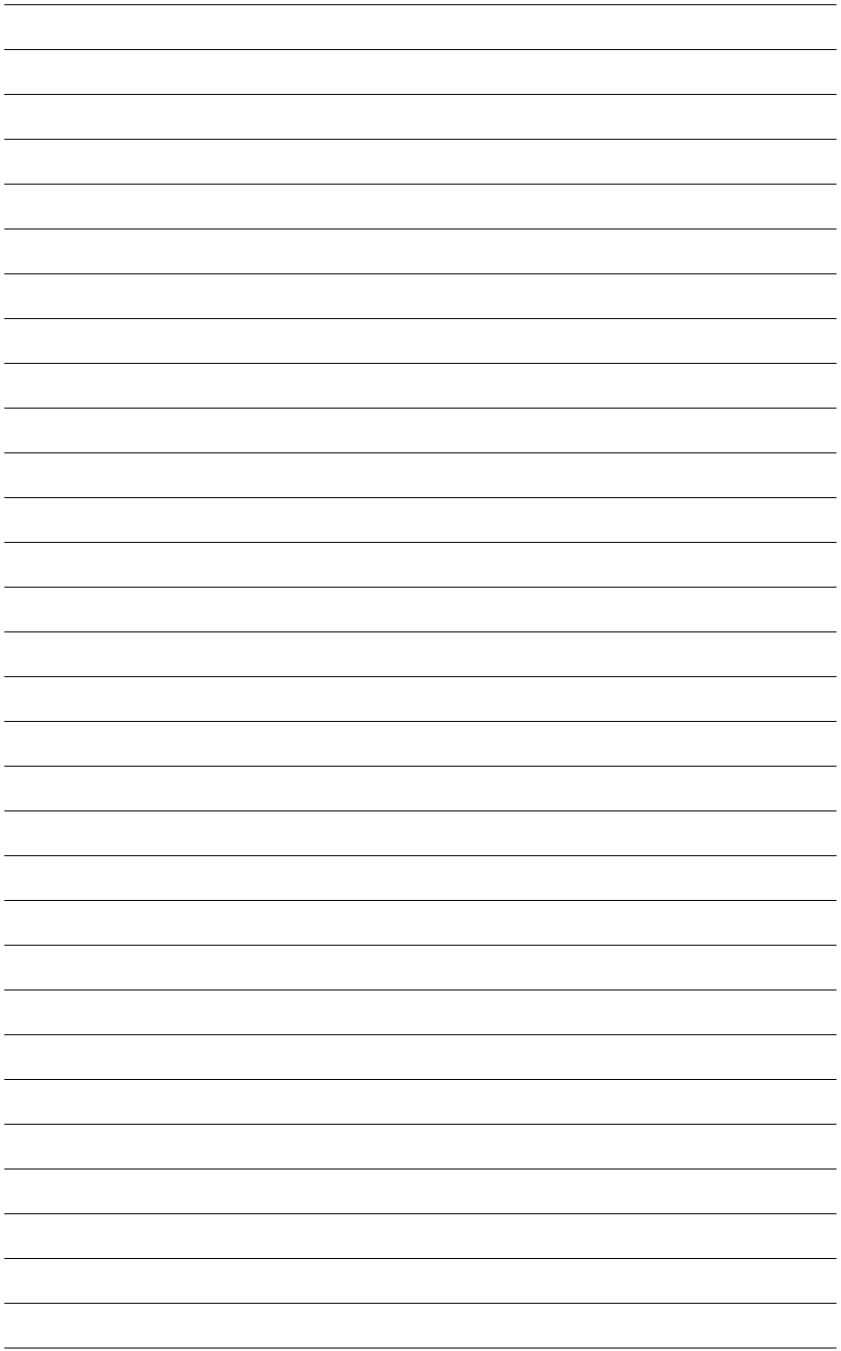


*It is in service to humankind
that service to God is proved.*

- Hans Kung

December





Scripture: Psalm 122

Reflection

In the presence of God we are called to love, we are called to be just and are called to plant peace.

In Psalm 122 we read that David is looking forward to be in that presence of the Lord once again. To stand in Jerusalem, the magnificent city which God chose for His temple to be build and where He lived between His People. The psalm was sung during the pilgrimage that Israelites used to make to Jerusalem. Three times a year they would make the journey to celebrate the three big feast. Passover, Feast of weeks and the feast of tabernacles were feasts to remember important moments from the Biblical history. Moments in which Gods power and presence were imminent. The feast were connected to important moments for the harvest. During the feasts Israelites went to the temple to celebrate, rejoice and be thankful for that harvest by offering a part of it to God.

Being in the close vicinity of God's presence. Remembering how He was present in the past. And being thankful for what He still offered today, planted a yearning for peace in the hearts of the Israelites.

In the beginning of December we are called for our own spiritual pilgrimage towards one of Christianity's feasts; Christmas is upon us. We remember the moment God chose to become human and live among us. It reminds us of God laying down his majesty and becoming a fragile Babyboy. Advent is a time to reflect and prepare. Reflect upon what God has done in the past, where we can experience Gods presence and what he is doing in the present. We can prepare to follow Gods example. Lay down our power and start being fragile, because in that fragility God chooses to be present within us.

Robert Jan Nijland-Beltman, Face to Face participant



Partners in Mission

We pray for people who are discerning God's invitation to participate in mission through the CWM Partners in Mission Programme.

Scripture: Isaiah 11:1-10

Reflection

Isaiah 11:1-10 is traditionally regarded as a Messianic passage indicating the Davidic line of the Messiah King (Daniel 9:24) which to this day the Jews await. This Messiah would usher in a rule of peace and security which would bring even nature into harmony with its original created order. Many Jews to this day find it hard to accept a religion that led to much bloodshed and heartache among the 'Chosen people' over the last two millennia, and therefore are still cautious about evangelistic efforts in their midst. But there are incredible signs of restoration and return to the land over the last 70 years.

As we contemplate the coming of Jesus as a baby in a lowly Bethlehem stable, we remember that it was the sovereign power of God that initiated this most incomprehensible of plans. It was the wisdom of God to bring glory from shame, peace from irreconcilable separation, healing from the deepest of pain. We have seen this played out over and over again in our own human history. In the midst of chaos and uncertainty, God promises peace. In the face of inexplicable circumstances God's triumph and victory are manifested in those who watch in humility for His great salvation.

God showed His power through a completely vulnerable baby born amongst lowing animals. God showed His wisdom through revelation to the least expected of men and women God showed His glory through the lips of ailing prophets and broken leaders. God made His will known to humanity and calls us to demonstrate His power, wisdom and glory through the very things that highlight our weakness, fear, uncertainty, inadequacy, inexperience, and our past. Let us commit our failings and weaknesses to Him that He may transform them into His purposes on this earth.

Yoshua Chua, Gereja Presbyterian Malaysia

Prayers

Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand

Please pray with the Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand for:

- Congregations as they seek to respond to God's call to be involved in God's mission.
- For the multi-cultural and cross cultural commitment to underpins the church's ministries.
- For the national staff who support local congregations as they engage in God's mission.

Scripture: Isaiah 35: 1-10; Psalm 146: 5-10; James 5: 7-10; Luke 1: 46b-55

Reflection

It is ten days before the day on which Christians celebrate the kenotic event of God's as the Word and dwelling among us, with life that is the light of all humankind. God's indwelling remains the acme of God's salvific plan in history to save humankind from the snares of sin (humans missing the mark). The situation of sin is depicted in the scriptures that are cited above in the worst scenarios as wickedness and oppression – especially of the fatherless and widows (Ps 146: 7&9); the desert and wilderness (Is 35: 1); suffering (James 5: 10). These are the situations of injustice and unrighteousness.

The kenotic God broke through human knowledge and expectations and entered into the situations and dwelt among us that we may behold the glory of God. God, thus, “upholds the cause of the oppressed, gives food to the hungry, sets the prisoner free, gives sight to the blind... (and) sustains the fatherless and the widow” (Ps 146: 7-9); comes “with vengeance; with divine retribution to save” (and the eyes of the blind are opened, ears of the deaf unstopped, lame leap like a deer, mute tongue shout for joy, water comes from the wilderness, streams from the desert, mirage becomes a pool) (Is 35: 5-7); and scatters the proud, brings down the rulers and lift up the humble, fill the hungry with good things and sends the rich away empty” (Luke 1: 51-53).

Greek soterion and Latin salvator mean salvation. Latin salvus sis means good health. Hence our claim that soteriology is about 'good health' in all the environments and therefore it is liberation from all the schemes of the empire.

Lungile Mpetsheni, Uniting Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa



DARE Programme

We give thanks for the CWM Dare theological programme which brings together theologians and theological students for dialogue and engagement together.

Children and Youth: Staying the Course

Scripture: Isaiah 7: 10-16

Reflection

Advent is a time where children and youths can stop and think about their relationship with God. Today children and youths have many opportunities in life, yet at the same time they are often faced with having to make difficult decisions. The Bible helps us to make choices as to how we should live. In Isaiah, Chapter 7, Ahaz was a bad king, yet God still shows him mercy. Isaiah advises Ahaz, "The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son and will call him Immanuel. He will be eating curds and honey when he knows enough to reject the wrong and choose the right."

Where do you look to obtain your wisdom, knowledge, and understanding from? People often in this life avoid any accountability for their actions. Some young people make excuses. Many blame others. Some children and youth avoid situations, delay, or postpone a difficult choice. Isaiah warns Ahaz to reject the wrong way of living and choose the right path and that everyone knows right from wrong from a young age; hence, the reference to a boy eating curds and honey. Ahaz was at a crossroads and Isaiah warned that if he did not stand firm in his faith he would not stand at all.

By standing firm in our faith when we are in times of trouble, children and youth can be blessed with Christ's love and develop their knowledge of His holy ways. In time, Jesus would grow up having a similar life to the children of his day and age. However, he would invariably refuse the evil and choose the good. We should strive to be like Jesus.

Martin Prout, Congregational Union of New Zealand (CUNZ)

Children and Youth: Staying the Course

Prayers

Presbyterian Church of Singapore

The Presbyterian Church of Singapore invites us:

- Give thanks for all the local churches which may have their own uniqueness of character and ministries, strengths and weaknesses. Please pray for unity between Synod as Headquarter and Member Churches that we will recognize our common ground as we face a whole new world of complicated issues.
- Pray that even in the midst of our differences, we will seek to go forward together as a denomination and be kingdom minded in order to fulfill the great commission of Jesus Christ.

Christ in us the hope of glory

Scripture: Colossians 1:27

Reflection

Sunday 19th was the date that it became one year I have been in Jamaica as a Mission Partner. On this day I sat down at the Manse reflecting on the five (5) days I took to have a short holiday in the Western part of the country. I joined many, many people from all over the world coming for their holidays and it was such a wonderful week!

Each night of the day, we were treated to different types of entertainment and countries were mentioned from where the people present had come. Almost all the continents were mentioned except Africa which is the continent on which my homeland Zambia is located in the central part of Africa! I felt left out and had deep reflection on my identity in this part of the world. The reason given was that not many people come to Jamaica from Africa.

Christ in me the hope of glory was a scripture that struck a chord in me. I was not just from Africa but I carry Christ in me who chose me so that I could make a difference wherever God took me. I realized that it is important for people of colour like me and other countries who are coming from the so-called 'Third World' countries to take it upon ourselves to empower ourselves and the communities we are coming from that we have Christ in us the hope of glory.

The hope of glory is the fulfillment of God's promise to restore us and all creation (Peter 5:10). This hope is not a wishful thought but the confident, expectant joyful knowledge that we are being changed by God who has given us his power to do all that we can to impact our world no matter how many times we are ignored. We should speak out against any injustice, discrimination and rid ourselves of any inferiority complex so that we can penetrate any sphere of life and talk about the beauty of all people and how God loves each one of us.

Christ in us gives us power to be transformed from the negative view of ourselves to powerful human beings who are capable of not only spreading the word, but also practise it in areas that are empowering and action-oriented. In so doing, people in our communities will be able to rise above poverty and work hard to the point of owning business entities like hotels and shopping complexes rather than leaving them to those who only come to take away our wealth.

Jane Kaluba, CWM Partner in Mission



Christmas

Jesus, Prince of Peace bring your gift of peace and harmony to our troubled world. Come with compassion to all who suffer as victims of war and conflict and with disturbance to all who profit from violence and war.

Scripture: Psalm 148

Reflection

When I read Psalm 148, some reflections come into my mind for the Myanmar context and how much we need nature's ability to regenerate the materials we depend upon for our survival.

1. To some extent, the Psalmists depictions look metaphorical or like poetic imagery. We should draw attention to the theme of creation's praise for its importance in shaping an ecological spirituality. While human beings are destroying the beauty of God's creation, other parts of creation worship God purely by being themselves and exist for God's glory.

2. Despite understanding the nature and beauty of God's glory in the universe, humans have destroyed nature for centuries with a "survival of the fittest" mind-set. Nature is now exhausted everywhere and could not glorify God in their regular rotation. Changes in climate conditions have already caused problems for agricultural production, agriculture dependent livelihoods and food. Freshwater availability is also at risk due to potential changes in river flows and rain forest systems.

3. Climate change and justice will have to be addressed in order for the balance of humanity with nature to readjust to sustainable levels. Our development paradigm is not only a concern about economics but also about moral personality. Human survival requires a rebalancing of human activity with natural systems and resources. What happens to natural global systems happens to all of us. We need an economic system that works for all, if not development will become destruction. If we are concerned about people we should think in terms of sustainable development.

Van Lal Hming Sangi, Presbyterian Church of Myanmar



Strategic Review

We pray for CWM as it seeks to discern new priorities and programmes through a strategic review process.

*If you want to make
peace with your enemy,
you have to work with your
enemy.*

*Then he becomes
your partner.*

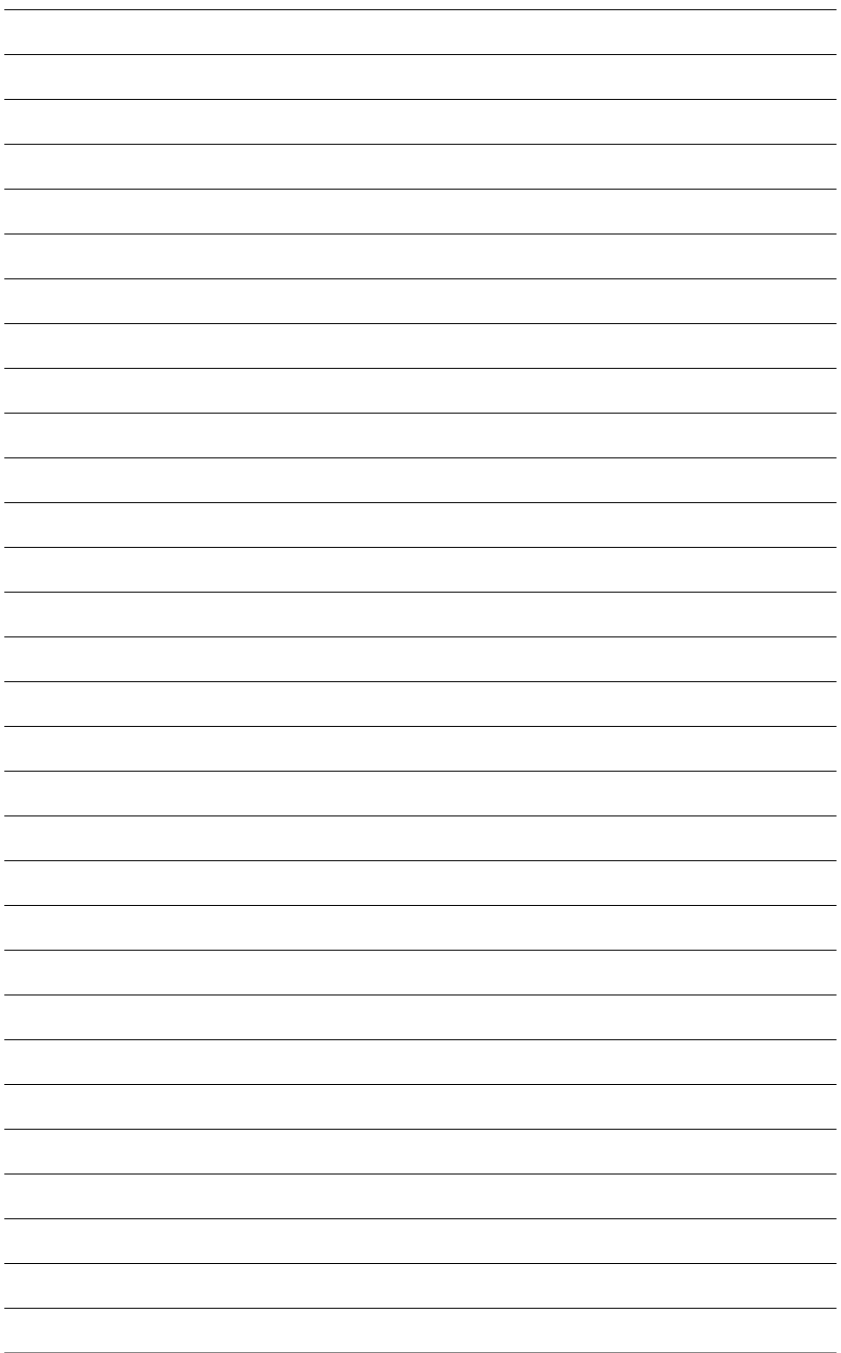
- Nelson Mandela



January



Dove of Peace, Bethlehem, 2005 - Banksy



Scripture: Ecclesiastes 3:1-3; Psalm 8; Revelation 21:1-6a; Matthew 25:31-46

Reflection

Together the appointed readings for this week's reflection tells a story of God's intention for all peoples to be fed, happy and share God's bountiful provisions. This is obvious from the following extracts:

1. I know that there is nothing better for people than to be happy and to do good while they live. That each of them may eat, drink and find satisfaction in all their toil – this is the gift of God (Eccl. 3: 12-13).
2. To the thirsty I will give water without cost from the spring of the water of life (Rev. 21: 6).
3. What is mankind that you are mindful of him, human beings that you care for them (Psalm 8: 4)?
4. I was hungry and you gave me something to eat. I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink.... In as much as you done this to the least... you have done it to me (Mt. 25: 35-40).

The strands of our global social context today tell a different story:

1. The richest 1% of the world's population now owns more than half of the world's wealth.
2. Despite advances in medicine, every single day, 16,000 children die before their fifth birthday of curable diseases for lack of access to health services. The world produces enough food to feed everyone. However, it is estimated that 815 million, 11 % of the world's population, people are starving.

This is inconsistent with God's design and highlights the compulsion for just and responsible living with regard for the wellbeing of the whole human race.

Reflect: What would it be like if everyone had adequate access to food, clothing and shelter? What if decent health care, education and employment opportunities were available to all? At this the beginning of a New Year, might this be the time - a new season - for each of us to act justly by being a little more responsible and attentive to the needs of others?



Collin Cowan, CWM General Secretary

New Year

God of new beginnings, bless us with your guiding wisdom to discern a way forward into a new year and courage to follow where you lead.



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