

SUNDAYS

WITH **CWM** 2025



a partnership
of churches
in mission



SUNDAYS
WITHCWM2025



Council for World Mission
www.cwmission.org

The Council for World Mission is a worldwide partnership of Christian churches. The 32 members are committed to sharing their resources of money, people, skills and insights globally to carry out God's mission locally. CWM was created in 1977 and incorporates the London Missionary Society (1795), the Commonwealth Missionary Society (1836) and the (English) Presbyterian Board of Missions (1847).

OUR VISION

“ Life-flourishing Communities, living out God’s promise of a New Heaven and a New Earth. ”

This vision articulates CWM’s conviction that the life-giving alternative that characterised the mission of Jesus is the basis of our hope. In naming life-flourishing communities as our vision, CWM sees the unfolding of a restored and renewed creation, an experience of a different world in our lifetime, where human dignity is protected, poverty eradicated, climate catastrophe abated, ideologies of supremacy demolished and peace reigns. The vision statement captures the essence of subversive imagination of a different world, where the Earth and all that is in it serve and sustain all of God’s creation; and where the people of God envision this new life for now.

OUR MISSION

“ Called in Christ to radical and prophetic discipleship, working in partnership with churches and the ecumenical community to resist life-denying systems, affirm peace, do justice and enable life-flourishing communities. ”

In our theology statement we declare that “We seek, as an organisation and as a partnership of churches, a life rooted in obedience to God’s mission focused on:

Rising with the risen Jesus whose resurrection is insurrection and proclamation that Babylon is as fallen as the tomb is empty; and

Responding in radical discipleship where we live out the New Heaven and New Earth in the midst of a violent, abused and grieving world as signs of transforming love.”

CWM’s emphasis is on naming this “violent, abused and grieving world” that ought to be replaced with life-flourishing communities, based on justice and peace. It is a clear sense of call to partnership with churches and the ecumenical community in which radical and prophetic discipleship is expressed in transformative and loving action to resist, affirm, support, and enable life-flourishing alternatives.

OUR VALUES

The underlying core values that have guided CWM since 1977 and informed its relationship with others in doing God’s mission are:

Justice in relationships

Mutuality, equality and interdependence

Generosity of spirit

Unity in diversity

This is a kairos moment for CWM. The changing landscape of global Christianity is facing new challenges and opportunities. These challenges require mission agencies and churches to examine their values.



EUROPE

Congregational Federation (CF)

Presbyterian Church of Wales (PCW)

Protestant Church in the Netherlands (PKN)

Union of Welsh Independents (UWI)

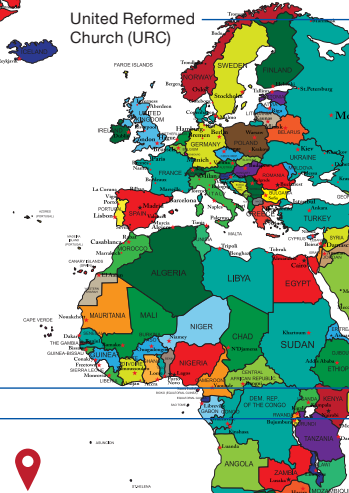
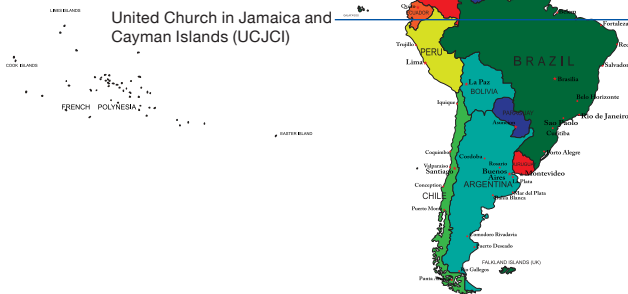
United Reformed Church (URC)



CARIBBEAN

Guyana Congregational Union (GCU)

United Church in Jamaica and Cayman Islands (UCJCI)



AFRICA

Church of Jesus Christ in Madagascar (FJKM)

Churches of Christ in Malawi (CCM)

United Church of Zambia (UCZ)

United Congregational Church of Southern Africa (UCCSA)

Uniting Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa (UPCSA)

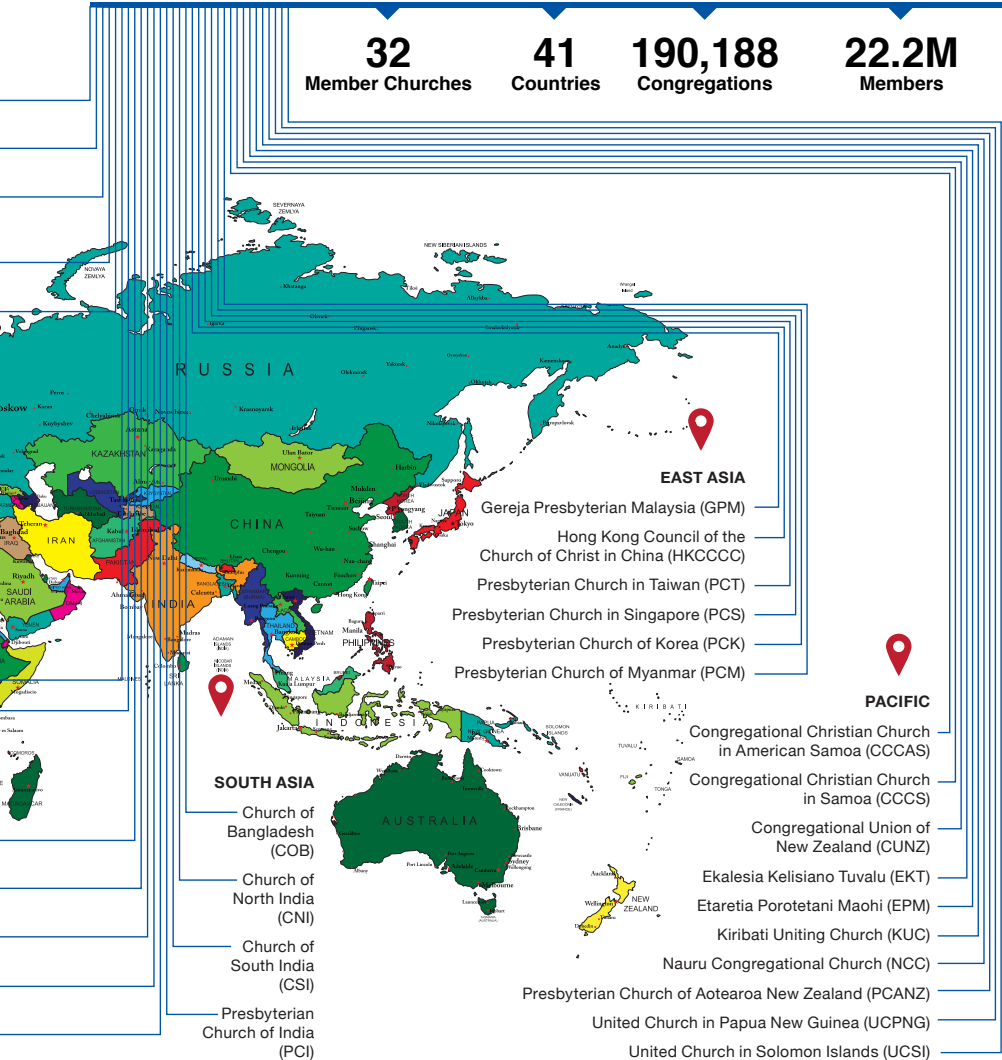
Our Members

32
Member Churches

41
Countries

190,188
Congregations

22.2M
Members



FOREWORD

Dear sisters and brothers in Christ,

Warmest greetings to you in the name of the Triune God—the God of Life, the God of Justice, and the God of Peace!

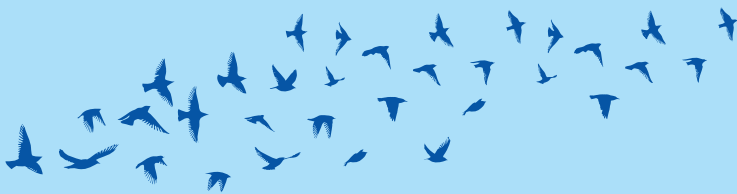
I am pleased to present to you a CWM tradition: “Sundays with CWM 2025,” our collection of weekly devotions for individuals, families, and congregations who are all on a missional journey together.

Sundays with CWM 2025 reflects contributions from member churches in six regions. Each week, you will find a different voice sharing a biblical text, reflections, and a prayer.

Each passage will help you get to know a different regional voice within the CWM family, and you will find that, though we come from vastly different contexts, we are witnessing together to God’s life-giving mission when we gather through these pages. Let the whole CWM family unite in prayer for one another.

In these pages, you will find reflections about justice—related to climate, race, gender, and many other areas—as well as human rights, young people, the lessons and burdens of history, and the challenges of the tech-driven present. We hope that stories of overcoming economic and financial injustice, responding to natural disasters, and caring for one another amid conflict will move you not only to deeper prayer but to more intentional, meaningful action and toward building more just and inclusive communities.

As we share these devotions throughout the year, may they draw us together on our ongoing journey of transformation, give us the courage to boldly confess our faith in the “God of Life,” and reaffirm our commitment to follow Jesus in radical discipleship.



FOREWORD

Many of the stories in this publication are very personal—they show how one person or community has been able to resist life-denying systems, affirm peace, and do justice. These are powerful stories that reclaim the human face and the testimonies of God's people.

What is God's mission today? May the stories shared help you answer this question, and create spaces in your own homes, churches, and communities for dialogue, collaboration, and collective action. As the world becomes more unstable and member churches face challenges such as climate crises, wars and conflicts, economic downturns and social divisions, let us come together in prayer.

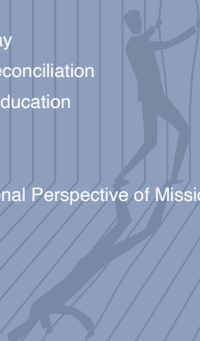
Wishing you all a prayerful and hope-filled 2025.

Rev. Dr Jooseop Keum
General Secretary



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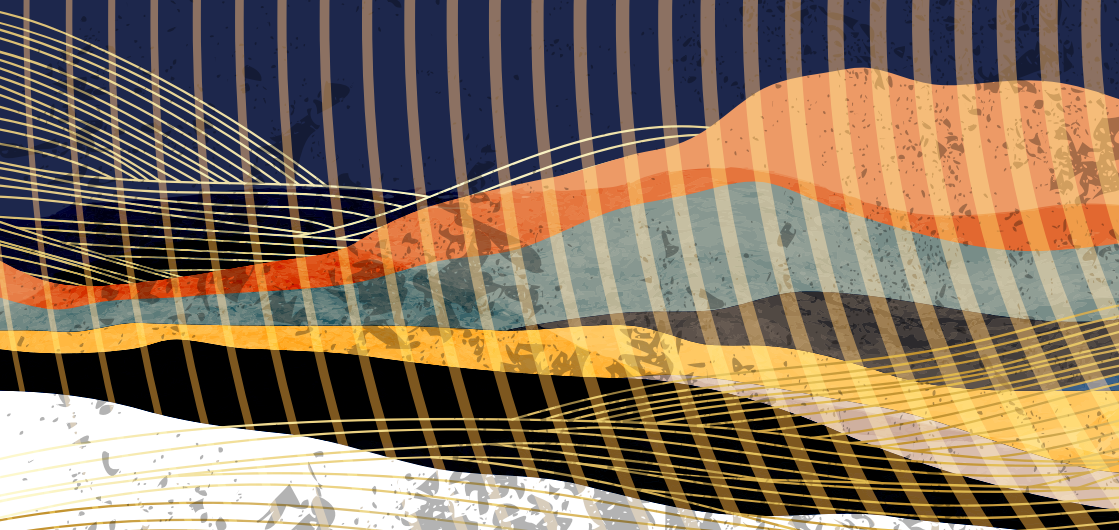
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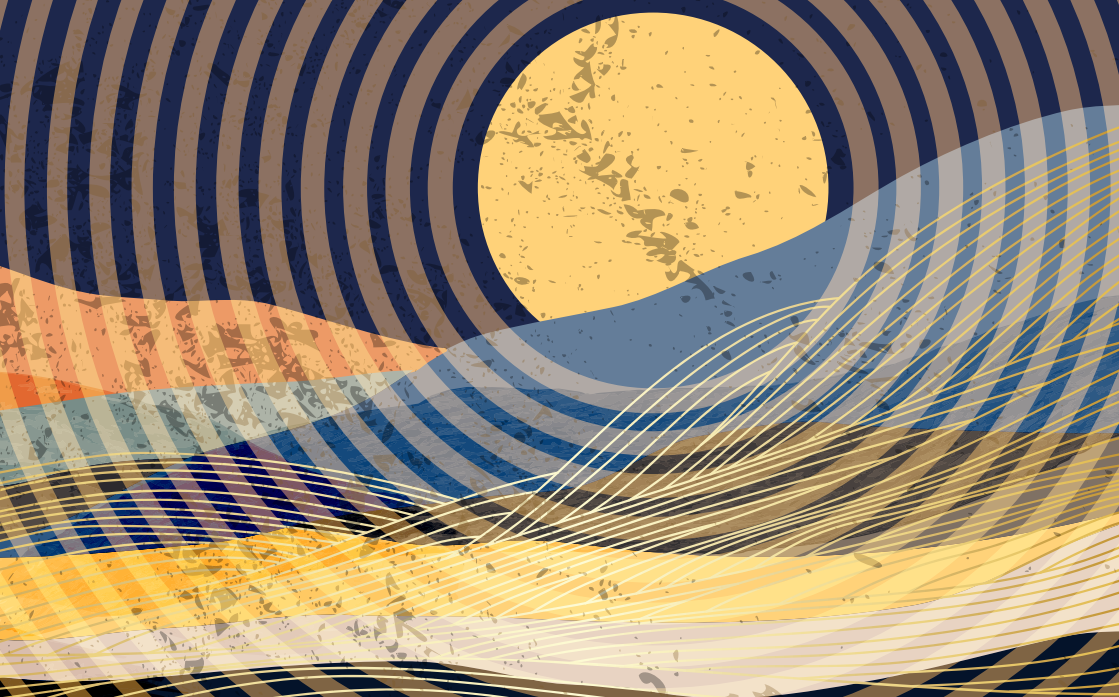
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* All verses quoted are from the NRSV

Janu



May



5th January **New Year**

Dr Sudipta Singh

Renewal and Commitment

"Do not remember the former things, or consider the things of old. I am about to do a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?" (Isaiah 43:18-19)

When we find ourselves lost, there is where God finds us, perhaps, even where we were meant to be found. It is often easy to become confined to the expressions of being lost in mere meander to our common call to listen attentively, walk humbly and live righteously.

The new year, gives us a time to reflect deeply on our collective journey, both as an 'individual' and as a 'church'. Here, we are called to first discern, 'is the work well done?' then, how can I commit to the God of all life.

In a world often defined by the legacies of colonialism—where power dynamics disrupt communities and marginalize voices—we are called to remember that every new beginning is an act of resistance against historical injustices. We see this in almost every culture where injustice used to reign; life springs forth to rewrite history.

Stories were once told of a golden city, 'el dorado.' The story sold very well, as European powers of the time sought to locate themselves within the gold rush of 'development.' Many of the European powers brought labourers to furnish their understanding of development.

The labourers were often treated with much disdain - as are the descendants of migrants in this current world dis-order.

However, we see God being resilient to injustice. We see life continues to spring forth, as God locates within the poorest of the poor. Reggae and calypso were born to the region – to a people once oppressed, now, profess peace and unity and seek to encapsulate life-flourishing alternatives.

In the much grander scheme of things, we see the effects of gold rush mentalities through settler colonialism and the petty bourgeoisie's fascist attempt to become like the 'great powers,' again at the cost of exploitation.



The scripture text from Isaiah 43 calls us to embrace transformation in times of uncertainty where God invites promises of not only restoration but also abundant life! Renewal is a journey that must not be one taken alone, but a journey with the others from where we are. Our prayers must resonate with those striving for justice in their communities, recognizing injustices exist in places that we choose to ignore.

This year, let us commit to amplifying voices of those who have been silenced. Let this be a year during which Christ's message challenges us to live out God's call for the Kingdom of God to reign here on Earth as it is in Heaven. The call to embrace new beginnings further invites us to hold fast to our commitment to striving for justice and peace in our common world, recognising that the world is not the same for all of us, and for all among us. The new year brings for us the call to be recommitted to God's design to be found as the hands and feet of where we are called to be.

Prayer

God of new beginnings,
Fill our hearts with courage to embrace change.

Challenge us to acknowledge where we have fallen short in justice and love. May we listen attentively to the voices of those marginalized, seeking wisdom and amplify their experiences.

Grant us the strength to work together as one body, recognizing that our varied gifts and backgrounds only serve to enrich our communal journey.

May we step boldly into the new, you have prepared for us, confident in the promise that you are making a way in the wilderness and creating streams where there are none.

Together, let us celebrate the diversity of the people, empowered by faith and guided by love. Amen.

12th January **Climate Justice**

Rt Rev. Sourabh Pholia

Climate Justice Means Acknowledging Inequities

“Learn to do right; seek justice. Defend the oppressed. Take up the cause of the fatherless; plead the case of the widow.” (Isaiah 1:17)

Water, the essence of life, has become a source of suffering and hardship in Bangladesh. Each passing year, the destructive force of cyclones, the relentless flooding, and the creeping rise of sea levels serve as stark reminders of a changing climate. This environmental crisis is not a distant threat but a present danger that endangers the lives and livelihoods of millions, particularly the most vulnerable and underprivileged.

Climate change is not only an environmental issue but also an issue of justice in Bangladesh. The repercussions of climate change disproportionately affects already marginalized populations, such as people experiencing poverty, women, children, and rural residents. The surging waters of the Bay of Bengal have engulfed the coastal villages, fields, and homes. Climate change is uprooting families and making them climate refugees. The people of Bangladesh who have experienced the brunt of the impacts of global warming are those who have contributed the least to it. God’s invitation, found in Isaiah 1:17, tells us to “seek justice” and “defend the oppressed.” Calls for justice often entail requests for equity and protecting society’s most vulnerable citizens. That implies standing on behalf of the suffering people.

The biblical tradition holds that the welfare of humanity and the preservation of creation are intimately tied to each other. When God created the Earth, God proclaimed it was “good” (Genesis 1:31). God made it perfect and built a harmonious relationship (interconnectedness) between humans and the natural world. However, that harmony has been distorted. The pollution, devastation, and exploitation that are destroying our planet most directly affect countries like ours. Bangladesh is regularly mentioned as one of the countries most vulnerable to climate change. Ignoring the screams of the Earth and the impoverished is impossible in this case. When floods damage houses, people experiencing poverty have nowhere else to go. When seawater intrusion destroys crops, rural farmers struggle to support their families. When cyclones strike, coastal towns are the ones that are left in ruins.



In response to these crises, God encourages us to act. He urges us to uphold justice, safeguard the environment, and speak out for those whose voices are routinely disregarded. Climate justice requires acknowledging the inequities.

Climate justice is predicated on recognizing and resolving the disparities in the effects of climate change. It means advocating for legislation that reduces environmental damage and protects vulnerable communities. It entails supporting those in Bangladesh who are directly affected by this disaster.

As disciples of Christ, we cannot overlook the Earth's suffering or its inhabitants. Because of our principles, our answer must be fair and caring. Just as Jesus stood up for the weak and defended the oppressed, so too are we to stand with those affected by climate change in Bangladesh and around the world.

Still, we need to do more than just be compassionate. We can begin by reducing our environmental impact, making choices that show our reverence for God's creation, and supporting initiatives that promote sustainability and resilience. We can encourage international climate policies that consider the needs of vulnerable nations like Bangladesh and push for greater accountability from the countries that contribute the most to climate change.

The ultimate goal of climate justice is to restore God's creation to its natural balance. It is about healing the divisions between the rich and the poor and between humanity and the environment. It bears witness to God's work of redemption and admits that God yearns for justice for all creation.

Prayer

Creator God, we pray for Bangladesh and all people suffering from climate change. We pray for Your direction as we pursue environmental and social justice because we hear the impoverished and the Earth cry out. Give us the bravery to protect Your creation and stand up for the oppressed. As Your loving and restoring agents in a world needing healing, please help us. Thank you, Jesus. Amen.

19th January **Racial Justice**

Rev. Dr Amos Massey

Chosen in the Face of Prejudice: Embracing Identity Amidst Adversity

“Your servants have been keepers of livestock from our youth even until now, both we and our ancestors – in order that you may settle in the land of Goshen, because all shepherds are abhorrent to the Egyptians.” (Genesis 46:34)

In the above verse, Joseph instructs his family to present themselves to Pharaoh as livestock keepers, emphasising their longstanding occupation. This approach reveals the cultural dynamics, as shepherds were viewed unworthy and with disdain by Egyptians. This situation serves as a sad reality on racial justice and discrimination.

People in India too, face racial discrimination based on ethnicity, race, colour, language, and also based on physical appearances. For example, the northeast Indians feel insecure in their own country when they face questions and statements like “what are you doing in our country? Can you speak my language? If you are in Bangalore, you should speak Kannada. You are Chinese chinkies.”

Therefore, tens of thousands of migrants returned to the northeast driven by the fear of racially targeted attacks. It is because justice and fairness are difficult for political and economic reasons in the northeast state when compared to other states of India, and when they go outside from their state in search of jobs and education. So, racial prejudice plays a dominant role in the hostile approach to the migrants and racism is at the root of the hostile environment.

Joseph's guidance illustrates a strategic response to societal prejudice. By identifying as livestock keepers, the Israelites could secure a distinct place in Goshen, away from the Egyptian population, which would help preserve their identity and faith. This separation was not merely practical but also a safeguard against assimilation into a culture that did not honour their God.



The narrative invites us to consider how we respond to racial discrimination today. Just as Joseph sought to protect his family from prejudice and brought a protective measure, Christians are called to advocate for justice and equality.

To determine what the scripture has to say about advocacy, the question we need to ask is: “Who are ‘God’s people on the move’ and what is our responsibility, as Christians, towards them?”

Peter in his first letter in the New Testament writes to God’s people on the move, forced to escape brutal persecution because of their faith. From his description, we can tell that even in their new home, they were still experiencing suffering and conflict. They were nobody’s choice for new neighbours. They were unwanted individuals, strangers in the world, at odds with the culture where they were now living.

But Peter’s opening message to these Christians is astonishing: “You have been chosen by the God, you may be unknown to the people around you, they might not understand who you are, but God has always known you and chosen you.”

Can we imagine how profoundly reassuring this was for these rejected/excluded/discriminated ones? Despised by the society around them, hounded from their homes, they were nonetheless chosen by God.

Similarly, Christians today should build inclusive communities that celebrate diversity rather than perpetuate division. This involves not only standing against discrimination but also actively promoting understanding and reconciliation among different racial and ethnic groups.

By reflecting on these principles from Genesis 46:34, we can better understand contemporary issues of racial justice, ensuring our actions align with the biblical call to love and respect all individuals.

Prayer

God of justice, we live in this world, in which sadly injustice is manifested in ways that are harmful and damaging to so many, especially the most vulnerable and marginalised. By the power of Your Holy Spirit, give us, as Your people, the courage to stand up for what is just and right, and against sinful attitudes and behaviours that fail to treat all people with the respect and dignity they deserve, as men and women created in Your likeness.

All we ask in name of Jesus, Amen.

26th January **Gender Justice**

Dr Lalmuanpuii Hmar

Church's Missional Imperative for Gender Justice

"God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day." (Genesis 1:31)

Oftentimes I am caught with amazement and surprise when churches in different parts of India acknowledge and express their admiration for the ministry of Buhfaitham, one of the many ministries carried out by the Women's Fellowship of the Mizoram Presbyterian Church, a church in Northeast India, where every family sets aside a handful of uncooked rice before meal to be given to the church. The process of collecting and selling the rice falls in the hands of the Women's Fellowship and a whopping 2.5 million USD was raised in the last financial year.

This practise contributes a lot in making the church become self-contained. The church members live with the conviction that as long as they have food to eat every day, they have something to give to God every day. However, the ministry of ordination ironically is denied to these competent women by the church administration run by men.

The church today continues to be a source of pain and suffering for many of its members in providing a safe and just space for people. Many of us remain a product of a church culture that breeds xenophobia, patriarchy, homophobia, and transphobia. The victims faced innumerable difficulties and challenges both in society and church, making them scared to go to church because they often hear hate and repressive sermons.

By denying ordination and equal opportunities to women and declaring the queer community as undeserving of acceptance and love, the church betrays its calling to be the body of Christ. The identity of every individual is not one's race or sex, but the image of God, which God considered "very good" (Gen 1:31). Everyone is made in the representation of God. Wounding, hurting, depriving, oppressing, denying the rights of any individual affect the image of God.



Many a time, we base our faith on very difficult and demanding values and commitments while neglecting our call to love our neighbour. The reign of God brings justice as a central value in a world where power differentials exist. Justice is a centrepiece of Jesus' teachings. Attention to justice implies that we are also called to address injustice.

We have just one golden rule: to treat others as we wish to be treated.

Gender-based violence, discrimination, and hostilities either on the level of the church universal or within each local church destroy the unity of the Spirit. Peace must prevail. The church must therefore continue to work towards celebrating the divine gift of sexuality and treat everyone with compassion, justice, inclusivity, and acceptance.

Prayer

Thank you, God, for creating us in your own image to bring happiness and joy to the world and to have a significant and prosperous existence. Empower us all to spread peace, love, justice, and equality in the world. This we ask through Christ our Lord. Amen.





2nd February **Rights of the Indigenous People**

Rev. Sam Britto

Honouring the Rights of Indigenous People

"For surely I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord, plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future with hope." (Jeremiah 29:11)

Introduction

As brothers and sisters in Christ, we are gathered here to consider the rights and dignity of Indigenous people, a fundamental component of our faith. The Bible exhorts us to treat everyone with justice, kindness, and respect. Let's examine, via the prism of Scripture, what it means to respect and defend the rights of Indigenous people.

Acknowledging Historical Injustices

The prophet teaches us to "learn to do good; seek justice, rescue the oppressed, defend the orphan, plead for the widow." This is found in Isaiah 1:17 (NRSV). We must address the historical injustices that Indigenous communities have experienced as followers of Christ. Cultural erasure, forced relocation, and colonization are all part of this traumatic past. We are compelled by our faith to face these realities with humility and a dedication to justice.

Accepting God's Plan for Every People

We are reminded of God's intentions for everyone's welfare and hope in Jeremiah 29:11. The long-marginalized Indigenous communities are included in this vision. It is our responsibility to uphold their rights to land, culture, and self-governance. Paul states, "From one ancestor he made all nations to inhabit the whole earth," in Acts 17:26 (NRSV). This highlights the equality and oneness of all people, regardless of their circumstances.

Appreciating Indigenous Knowledge and Tradition

Proverbs 2:6 (NRSV) states, "For the Lord gives wisdom; knowledge and understanding come from his mouth." Indigenous cultures have a strong connection to the creation of the Creator and a wealth of wisdom. Their customs and practices provide valuable insights into sustainable life and spirituality, which we must cherish and learn from. Honoring Indigenous knowledge deepens our faith and increases our comprehension of God's creation.



Fighting for Fairness and Peace

According to Micah 6:8 (NRSV), “What does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?” Fighting for Indigenous rights is a must in our faith; it is not an option. We need to support laws and initiatives that advance justice, compensation, and reconciliation in order to show our support for Indigenous communities. This entails taking care of matters like their cultural heritage preservation, healthcare access, education, and land rights.

Conclusion

As we draw to a close, let’s not forget what Jesus said in Matthew 25:40 (NRSV): “Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.” It is a sign of our devotion to Christ that we are committed to the rights of Indigenous people. May we, equipped by the Holy Spirit, go forth and pursue justice, exhibiting empathy and respect for the inherent worth of every child of God.

Prayer

Kind and compassionate God, we give you thanks for the great variety in your creation and the special contributions made by Indigenous peoples. Please pardon us for the times we failed to enforce the law. Assist us in advocating for everyone’s rights and dignity. Lead us on the path to peace and healing.

We pray in the name of Jesus. Indeed.

9th Febuary **Pacific Region**

Rev. Moega Lasei

Let Us Use Our Gifts

"For surely I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord, plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future with hope." (Jeremiah 29:11)

"For just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us. If your gift is prophesying, then prophesy in accordance with your faith..." (Romans 12: 4-6)

The Pacific region is an area where 10 individual churches come under CWM, and importantly under the Lordship and the Body of Christ. In the Pacific, cultures and traditions are very much the same yet also possess unique aspects. Some of our churches are close to each other not only in location but also in way of life. There are also many different denominations, and many of us "do church" differently. Some of our island churches have more members than others. Some of our churches are currently affected by climate change more than others.

These Islands are all products of the Good News of Jesus Christ which was initially brought by the London Missionary Society in the early 1800s. And then, according to the history of the church, these Pacific Island people started going around their closer islands preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ. Just recently the celebration of 200 years of the gospel in the Pacific was celebrated in many ways.

In relation therefore to CWM, and in line with our text above, I see individual churches situated in different parts of the Pacific, yet having a unique way of linking and connecting to each other – having things in common with other members and parts of the body.

The apostle Paul talks about the body with many members, and all the members functioning differently. And individual churches, whichever region they belong to, are members of that body. And as the apostle Paul said, "we are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another. Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them..."



Often in Christian circles we hear about members arguing about who is the greatest among themselves. Even Jesus' disciples did that while he was listening. Our responsibility as members of the body of Christ is to use our God-given gifts to care and to look out for one another in the body. And I think that is what the image of the Pacific region looks like. We are connected not only by the waves of the Pacific Ocean but also by the Island Breeze—the Spirit of God that blows across the islands. The dedication and the devotion of each member church makes the Pacific region unique in great ways in their roles of serving God through CWM. Amen.

Prayer

Thank you, our Father, for the way that you have placed us in different parts of the world but still linked to each other. Teach us to use the gifts you have given to us for your glory wherever we are and teach us to appreciate our uniqueness in You. In Jesus' name. Amen.

16th February **Youth and Ministry Formation**

Mr Petaia Junior Tuifao

Be An Answer to the Person Not the Question

"No one was able to give him an answer, nor from that day did anyone dare to ask him any more questions." (Matthew 22:46)

Our theme for today is a very simple one; it is similar to another phrase: "be the solution not the problem." It focuses on finding a perfect outcome sought out by people. Sometimes there are questions for which we need answers. These questions can sometimes be difficult.

Sometimes, we need answers to difficult questions so that we find assurance and hope. We see that idea in the passage we read from the New Testament today.

Our reading for today highlights Jesus answering a couple of questions given by the Sadducees and Pharisees.

They first ask Jesus about the resurrection, to which Jesus responds in a way that leaves them baffled. Then, they ask Jesus about which commandment is greatest; again Jesus responds by telling them they shall love God with all their heart, soul, and mind, and also love their neighbours.

His answers sum up all the commandments and laws which the Pharisees practised. Finally, in a turn of events, Jesus asks them about the nature of the Messiah, in hopes of seeing where their understanding lies.

They weren't able to comprehend Jesus' questions, leaving them unable to answer or ask any more questions.

The manner in which Jesus responded to their questions and gave his questions, was to see where the people's hearts and minds were.

The people were blind to see that the answers to their questions were before them; Jesus did not want to reveal the answers to them, for they lacked faith and understanding.



Jesus challenged their way of thinking by responding to their questions in a way that revealed the answers. Yet the answers are hidden from them because of their ignorance.

Brothers and sisters in Christ, that is the Gospel message for us today. There are times when we have questions that need answering.

We go out of our way seeking understanding, trying find hope, and get closure. However, as the Gospel reminds us today, we must also learn to answer these questions ourselves.

In doing so, we also help those around us, by being the answers to their questions or the solutions to their problems. We can do this by being honest and faithful Christians, living out the will of God, and loving those around us.

We must be kind, caring, and helpful in all we do. We must not make life harder for others, making them ask more questions about themselves and others.

Instead, we must be the answers to their questions, just as our theme suggests. Jesus Christ is the perfect example of being the answer to everyone's questions, for he alone is our salvation in whom we have hope.

Through his life, death, and glorious resurrection, he has assured us everlasting life, the grace of God for us all.

To God be the glory and praise, now and forevermore, Amen!

Prayer

Almighty God, guide me to be a source of comfort and strength to those in need. Help me to listen with compassion and to be present for them, not just in answering questions but in being a supportive presence.

Let my words and actions reflect Your love and care, offering solace and understanding. Amen.

23rd February **Church History in Tuvalu**

Rev. Ulufale Vaitusi

Love is Our Christian Uniform

*“By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.”
(John 13:35)*

In the history of the Christianization of Tuvalu, one particular island out of the eight islands in the Tuvalu group, has a story to tell of a significant event that took place during the attempt to Christianize the whole island.

According to the history of Niutao island, two missionaries—Rev. Tapu and Sione, who was a teacher from Niue—were already on the island doing as they were called to do.

The story goes that the high chief or the Ulu aliki accepted the new faith and gave orders that the whole island should accept the new faith. Unfortunately, a particular family refused to abide with the new decree but the Ulu aliki insisted that everyone should turn from their heathen gods to worship this new God.

As a messenger, a man called Kapui, who was believed to be huge in build, was sent with the message from the chief that if the family didn't forfeit their gods, they would be fined. As a result, after three attempts, this particular family speared Kapui and he survived the incident. Kapui's brother, also large in build, was away on another island but arrived on Niutao seeking to avenge his brother's blood. But Kapui cried and pleaded with him that he was willing to die for the gospel of Jesus Christ.

After a week, Kapui passed away and, according to the history of Niutao, Kapui's death marked the turning point of the whole of Niutao to accept the gospel of Jesus Christ. I believe Kapui had been marked a martyr of the gospel in the whole of the Tuvalu group. Sadly, no reports or accounts are found on this particular incident which occurred during the attempts to Christianize Niutao island.

In our reading, Jesus' public ministry draws near to an end, and with the last hours that he would spend with his disciples, he has to prepare them for the ministry. He has to provide them with guidance and advice that will help them understand the difficult paths that they will face during their journey as disciples.



But as in our chosen text, Jesus reminds his disciples of the act of loving one another. To me, to be united in the gospel means all should love one another. Jesus' intention for his disciples was that they have witnessed with their own eyes how a loyal and honest disciple should be, just as they witness in Jesus' life. Jesus showed them how to love and treat others, and showed them the need for continuity.

I believe Jesus knew the significance of having love among his disciples while working in the ministry on their own. Without love in their midst, the Good News would be defeated, for there would be no unity or uniformity.

On the other hand, there will be no contradictions between them. Kapui's motive was to bring unity to the people of Niutao— not divide them again as his brother intended to do. His intention was to unify the people of Niutao under the true colors of the gospel of Christ.

His braveness taught the people that in order to be called true disciples of Christ, love is their uniform.

Prayer

Dear Heavenly Father. We thank you for the love that you have shown us, through Jesus Christ, who gave his life as a living sacrifice, so we may find life to its fulness. Help us to be true disciples to you and guide us through our journeys as disciples in this world. Help us to shine and let others see in us, the true uniform of your kingdom.

In Jesus' name. Amen.

Ma



reach



2nd March **Missionary History in Kiribati**

Rev. Waiena Tatiree

Only Through Faith in God Can We Attain “Te Mauri, Te Raoi, ao Te Tabomoa”

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, just as he chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world to be holy and blameless before him in love.” (Ephesians 1:3-4)

Reflecting on Paul’s letter to the Christians in Ephesus. The opening chapter has led me to consider the three crucial Kiribati sayings: “Te Mauri, Te Raoi, ao Te Tabomoa.”

These three words, which represent the Kiribati motto, are commonly seen on the ribbon beneath the shield on the coat of arms of Kiribati. There is an imbedded and crucial meaning of these words aligned to what Paul intended for Christians in Ephesus. These words express and remind them of God’s blessings (Te Mauri) that will lead to peace (Te Raoi) and a prosperous future (Te Tabomoa).

Paul begins by telling Christians in Ephesus that grace from God is a divine blessing. Although blessings are often seen as material possessions by human eyes, Paul intended for the Ephesians to understand that blessings are more than just physical items. Te Mauri, as Paul meant it, is centred on God alone.

A person with a beautiful heart, mind, soul, and body will receive abundant heavenly blessings. This pertains not to outward beauty but to a faithful heart devoted to God, the creator of all things. This is the essence of a blessing from God (Mauri) followed by God’s peace, and Tabomoa offers a pathway to hope for the future, and guarantees a secure place (am tabo) in the heavenly blessings (i moa).

Faith in God

Every individual’s journey captures the essence of Kiribati. We persevere, stand tall, and reflect on how to achieve a better life.



Our aspirations and dreams are centred on success, prosperity, and blessings. Despite our earnest efforts, we frequently encounter a world of injustice and corruption.

Unfortunately, we often engage in these actions due to greed and the desire for power. We can see the struggles that we low island atolls face due to climate change, and we hear the cries and struggles of our brothers and sisters in Oceania who are still fighting for their freedom from powerful colonialism. We seem to have strayed from the principles of “Mauri, te Raoi, ao te Tabomoa” by not keeping God at the center of our lives as Christians.

Paul reminds us to see ourselves as a new society blessed by our God (Mauri) and encourages us to be a blessing to others. Te Raoi—peace!

“Peace, I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid” (John 14:27).

Share God’s peace with one another and with the world. And let the bright future ahead of you be guided by Te Tabomoa (prosperity). A prosperous future, here, now and in the future.

Prayer

Creator God, we pray for your blessings (Mauri), peace (Te Raoi), and prosperity (Tabomoa) upon those who are living in despair, war, injustice, corruption, violated by male domination and greed for power. May your name be praised now and forever, Amen.

9th March **Member Church Initiative**

Rev. Wanda-Joleen Otuafi

Member Church Initiative

“You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead, they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.” (Matthew 5:14-16)

“And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.” (Hebrews 10:24-25)

In our mission as we share this initiative, we also reflect on how we can encourage and support one another, building a network of churches that are not only united in purpose but also vibrant in their service to the world. Let us embrace this opportunity to let our combined light shine, demonstrating the love of Christ through our collaborative efforts. By doing so, we not only fulfill our calling but also bear witness to the transformative power of working together in unity and love.

The member church initiative presents a compelling vision of collective Christian witness, deeply rooted in the call of Matthew 5:14-16 and Hebrews 10: 24-25. Reflecting on these scriptures, we see a bright illustration of how our collective efforts can illuminate the world and inspire acts of love and good deeds.

Matthew 5: 14-16 describes the church as a light in the world, a beacon that cannot be hidden. When individual churches unite their efforts, their combined light shines more brightly, offering a clear and powerful witness to God’s love and grace. This collective illumination goes beyond what any single congregation could achieve alone. Consider how your church’s unique strengths and resources could contribute to a larger, joint effort. How might uniting with other churches enhance the reflectivity and impact of your ministry?

Hebrews 10:24-25 emphasizes the importance of mutual encouragement and gathering. This scripture challenges us to actively provoke one another to love and good works, and not to neglect meeting together. The member church initiatives embody this by encouraging churches to come together, share their experiences and support each other’s missions. Reflect on how we participate in this initiative can nurture a spirit of collaboration



and shared growth. How can your church contribute to creating a more unified and supportive group of congregations?

Think about the ways in which working together with other churches can strengthen your combined influence. Reflect on past experiences where collaboration led to greater success or where a lack of unity hindered progress. How can embracing this initiative help overcome obstacles and create new opportunities for service?

As you reflect, pray for guidance on how to best contribute to and benefit from the member church initiative. Ask for wisdom in recognizing how your church's unique gifts can complement those of others, and for a spirit of help and encouragement in your shared mission.

In reflecting on these scriptures and your role in the initiative, may you find renewed inspiration to be a light in the world and to build a stronger, more united body of Christ.

Prayer

Lord, help us to be a shining light in our communities through the member church initiative. Inspire us to work together in unity and love, encouraging one another and reflecting Your grace.

May our collective efforts bring glory to Your name and advance Your kingdom. Guide us to let our light shine brightly, so that others may see our good deeds and be drawn closer to You. Strengthen our bonds as we meet and spur one another on towards love and good work. In all that we do, may we honour You and serve Your purposes faithfully. Amen.

16th March **Youth**

Mr Tahima Christophe

The Power of Decision

“Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not rely on your own insight. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths.” (Proverbs 3:5-6)

If we are certain that $1 + 1 = 2$, why do we hesitate to believe that Problem + God = Solution? Every day, we make decisions, often accompanied by doubts. But what about when our worries concern our future? This passage from Proverbs, attributed to Kings Solomon, reminds us to trust God in all aspects of life. But how does this translate concretely in your life and mine?

I would summarize it in three words: DECISION, DISCIPLINE, DISCERNMENT.

1. Decision: Trusting God begins with a conscious and selfless decision to place our confidence in Him.
2. Discipline: A spiritual discipline is necessary to allow Him to take control.
3. Discernment: Learning to know God is essential for recognizing and acknowledging His action in our lives.

The word “MANA” often synonymous with domination or power in reo māohi, carries the idea of being inherited from our ancestors or for some of us stemming from our selfishness.

Here, it takes on a different definition. It is one of the few powers we possess that gives authority to someone else: God. Isn't that, in your view, simply a proof of humility?

I would like for a moment to think about my Polynesian/Māohi ancestors, who traveled long distances at sea, navigating only by the stars with very few resources and little food. Their success relied as much on their skill as on their trust. Similarly, God invites us not to rely solely on our understanding but to trust Him as our spiritual GPS.

I often wonder, in a world where youth face challenges like climate change or social injustice, where confiding in others often means sharing our lives on social media, and where the weight of responsibilities sometimes rests on such small shoulders—how should we do act? It is essential, in my view, to distinguish what is urgent from what is important, while having faith that God goes before us on the path of our lives.



Too often, we inherit problems we did not create, which have various consequences. To whom should we confide our concerns? To the millions of friends we have, or to the one friend who responds with actions rather than words? I believe that beyond this trust, we must learn to act wisely; maybe as a young people, our paths will be better.

Jeremiah 17:7-8 completes this reflection with the thought that those who trust in God are like trees planted by the water, always green despite the storms.

la ora na

Prayer

Lord, la ora na, in all humility, we ask you to guide us in making the decision to let you lead our lives. Grant us the wisdom and strength to trust you every step of the way. Amen.

23rd March **Youth**

Mr Sioso Opao

Let Your Youth Days Be for God's Glory

"Rejoice, young man, while you are young and let your heart cheer you in the days of your youth. Follow the inclination of your heart and the desire of your eyes, but know that for all these things God will bring you into judgement." (Ecclesiastes 11:9)

Solomon speaks directly to a young man. Solomon tells the young man to let his heart be pleasant during the days of his young manhood. During days where responsibilities are light and energy is high, the young man is told to enjoy life to the fullest. Solomon comes to us reminding us to enjoy our young days, but we must remember that we will be accountable for our actions.

In all the choices the young man makes while enjoying life, he should bear in mind that there are consequences for his actions. There are consequences that extend even into eternity. For God will bring the young man to judgement for all the things he chooses to do. God gives us the amazing power to choose our actions. But when we choose our actions, we need to realize they are an investment that will yield an outcome. God will judge our actions at the end of our life. We will reap what we harvest in our youth days.

This passage indicates that the one thing God will judge is whether we enjoyed life. 1 Timothy 6: 17 tells us that God "richly supplies us with all the things to enjoy." It seems reasonable that we will have to answer to God for not enjoying all aspects of life God granted to us.

This harkens back to the underlying paradox of Ecclesiastes. The young man can rejoice when he secures his reason and decisions on the firm foundation of faith, seeing God both as a just God who will bring all the things into judgement, as well as loving God who desires us to enjoy love. Alternatively, if the young man views life from the shaky foundation of his capacity for reason and experience, he will ultimately end up in a vaporous stew of madness and futility.



Since God has given life and circumstances for us to enjoy, Solomon advises the young man to remove grief and anger from his heart. Sometimes circumstances bring pain. And often there is nothing we can do about it. But one choice we do have is whether to dwell upon the circumstances that brought us grief and anger. We have a choice to refuse to be denied or controlled by any circumstances. Solomon advises us that we should not allow pain to dominate our heart. One of the best ways to remove grief and anger is to replace them with gratitude for other things.

That we are told to remove grief and anger from our heart suggests that grief and anger are present. Indeed, the young man (and each of us) can invite both grief and anger at any time, depending upon how we choose to look at things. Grief and anger need to be dealt with, not ignored. The word translated as “pain” in the phrase “put away pain from your body” could also be translated as “evil.” So this could be taken as advice to avoid evil.

Prayer

Lord, we want to say thank you for blessing us with many things; many times we abuse your blessings and do things that are not pleasing to you. Lord we ask that may you remind us that we will be accountable for everything we do. We pray that your spirit will guide us in everything we do, so we may live a life that will reflect your glory.

In Jesus’ name we pray, Amen.

30th March **Youth and Intercultural**

Mrs Masele Anna-Marie Bakulich-Tufeao

Embracing Diversity in Christ's Love

"There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus." (Galatians 3:28)

Growing up with Samoan/Croatian in my home church, Newton Pacific Islanders Presbyterian Church, Auckland, New Zealand, I have been surrounded by the richness of both my heritage and the wider multicultural church community. The intersection of these identities, and the blending of two worlds, has been a blessing. It taught me early on the beauty of living in an intercultural space, where our differences are not walls but bridges.

Galatians 3:28 reminds us that in Christ, these differences do not separate us. Whether we are Samoan, Croatian, or from any other background, we are all one in Jesus. At Newton Pacific Islanders Presbyterian Church, I've witnessed this truth unfold as people from diverse walks of life come together, share their unique cultures, and unite in worship and service.

This diversity is a powerful testament to the kingdom of God. It reflects His creative design, where no culture is superior but all contribute to the beautiful mosaic of the global church.

For us as youth, this is both a gift and a calling. We are called to embrace one another's backgrounds, to share our stories, and to celebrate the differences that make our community so vibrant.

But living in this unity requires intention. It can be easy to gravitate toward those who are like us, to stick to what we know, and to view those from other cultures with hesitation.

Yet, Christ calls us to do the opposite. Just as He broke down cultural barriers, so too must we. Jesus loved people from all nations, and He invites us to follow His example, bringing unity where there once was division.



Let us dedicate ourselves to being a generation that values and celebrates intercultural relationships. As young individuals, particularly those of us navigating dual identities and the impacts of colonization and cultural loss, we have a unique opportunity to bridge divides and promote understanding. In our daily lives, through our actions and the love we show to others, let us embody the light that fosters unity among cultures, just as Jesus did.

Prayer

Heavenly Father, we thank You for the diversity of cultures and traditions that reflect Your creativity. Help us to see the beauty in every person, and empower us to be agents of unity in an increasingly divided world.

May the youth of today, especially those from intercultural backgrounds, be a shining example of how we can live together in harmony and love, just as we are one in Christ. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.



A large, stylized graphic of the word "Ap" in a bold, orange, sans-serif font. The letter "A" is on the left and the letter "p" is on the right. The background is light blue with various abstract shapes and patterns, including a large pink shape on the left, a yellow shape on the right, and a black outline of a rabbit's head and ears on the left. There are also several small black dots scattered throughout the background.

HAPPY
Easter



6th April **Community Development and Education**

Mr Brian Bird

Breaking the Spells of Anti-Life Systems

"After this there was a festival of the Jews, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. Now in Jerusalem by the Sheep Gate there is a pool, called in Hebrew Beth-zatha, which has five porticoes. In these lay many ill, blind, lame, and paralysed people. One man was there who had been ill for thirty-eight years. When Jesus saw him lying there and knew that he had been there a long time, he said to him, 'Do you want to be made well?' The ill man answered him, 'Sir, I have no one to put me into the pool when the water is stirred up, and while I am making my way someone else steps down ahead of me.' Jesus said to him, 'Stand up, take your mat and walk.' At once the man was made well, and he took up his mat and began to walk. Now that day was a Sabbath." (John 5:1-9)

The text offers a deep and thought-provoking exploration of the narrative surrounding a man who had endured the hardships of being ill for 38 long years. He was positioned by the Sheep Gate Pool, a site steeped in tradition and believed to possess miraculous healing properties.

According to the lore, an angel would descend to stir the waters of the pool once a year, creating a fleeting opportunity for healing. However, this annual event fostered a competitive atmosphere among the sick and disabled, as only one person could be healed each time the waters were stirred.

This scenario starkly illustrates the systemic issues of exclusion and prejudice that individuals with disabilities often face, particularly those who, due to their physical limitations, are unable to reach the pool in time to benefit from its purported healing powers. The role of civil authority and religious institutions in enabling an exploitative system needs to be questioned.

The implication is that both civil and religious leadership bear responsibility for the societal conditions that allow exploitation to thrive. This underscores the need for accountability and reform within these institutions to address and dismantle harmful practices.

The man's poignant lament to Jesus about his inability to reach the pool encapsulates the profound isolation and helplessness that often accompany the experiences of individuals who are sidelined by societal structures.

His words reflect a deep yearning for connection and healing, highlighting the emotional and psychological toll of being trapped in a cycle of despair. In a transformative moment, Jesus intervenes, asking the man if he wishes to be healed. This question is not merely rhetorical; it invites the man to reclaim agency over his own life and circumstances.

Jesus' subsequent command for the man to rise and walk symbolizes a radical act of liberation, challenging the established norms and practices that have kept the sick in a state of hopelessness. This act of healing transcends the physical; it represents a profound shift in the man's identity and status within a society that has long overlooked him.

The text serves as a clarion call for a critical examination of the societal structures that perpetuate cycles of suffering and injustice. It encourages Christians and individuals of all backgrounds to actively confront and dismantle these anti-life systems that prioritize competition over compassion and exclusion over inclusion.

The story stands as a powerful reminder of the necessity for empathy and transformative action in the face of systemic injustice, urging us to advocate for those who are marginalized and to work towards a more equitable and compassionate society.

In doing so, it emphasizes the importance of recognizing the inherent dignity of every individual, regardless of their circumstances, and the collective responsibility to foster environments where healing and support are accessible to all.

Prayers

- Uphold the life and wellbeing of people at the margin who are facing different forms of life-threatening conditions and systems.
- Boldness for Christians and individuals of all backgrounds to actively engage in breaking the cycles of anti-life systems in the world.
- Healing for humanity and creation.

13th April **Missionary History in the Cook Islands**

Mrs Maeva Manavaikai

Missiological History of the Cook Islands

“Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.” (Matthew 28:19-20)

Knowing our ‘Evangelia / Christian roots’ will enable us to appreciate the Gospel of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ in its power in transforming the lives of our ancestors from that of fear, vengeance, theft, idol worship, killing of children, cannibalism and doing all that is evil to that of peace, love, joy, kindness, abundance of food, dancing and just enjoying life to the fullest and worshiping the true God, the One who loves us so much. I hope this summary will impact the hearts of our future leaders to see and treasure the Godly heritage we have for 203 years.

The first British missionary to the Cook Islands, John Williams (1796-1839), landed on Aitutaki on 26 October 1821, thereby establishing the beginnings of a Christian mission in the region. Significantly, Williams was accompanied by Papeiha (d. 25 May 1867), a Tahitian convert and evangelist who had trained with Williams in Raiatea Tahiti, left to the care of Tamatoa Ariki and his people. Papeiha and other Tahitian evangelists were instrumental in the teaching and instructing the people of Aitutaki, Rarotonga and the remaining Cook Islands to accept Christianity and the true God in contrast to our wooden ones.

In the decades that followed, a significant number of Cook Islanders converted to Christianity and became missionaries—‘native teachers’—many training at the Takamoa Theological Seminary (established in Rarotonga 1839). Under the auspices of the London Missionary Society, it was these men and women who were responsible for extending the work of the mission in the wider Cook Islands region, travelling to Samoa, the Loyalty Islands (New Caledonia) and the New Hebrides (Vanuatu). The London Missionary Society arrived in Papua New Guinea in 1872, and Cook Islanders were stationed along the southern coasts until 1915. In essence, Cook Islanders were the missionary pioneers into the Pacific region. They formed a bridge of contact between other Pacific peoples and



European missionaries, as they lived among and evangelised the local people. This often came at a huge personal cost with many men and their wives and families lost to sickness and death.

While their contributions are widely respected and honoured by those respective island countries, many of the records originally held in the region have sadly not survived, largely lost and hidden histories of Cook Islanders, such as Ruatoka (1846-1903), a pioneering missionary to Papua New Guinea and graduate of the Takamoa Theological Seminary.

In 1965 the London Missionary Society operations ended in the country, heralding the creation of the Cook Islands Christian Church (CICC), which assumed the management of church activities formerly performed by the missionary society. The CICC now owns and operates Takamoa Theological College, one of the oldest theological colleges in the South Pacific. Bicentenary celebrations will be led by the CICC and will be a time to celebrate the work of over 250 Cook Islander missionaries.

Truly the gospel concerning the Son of God Jesus our Lord and Saviour is the Power of God for the Salvation of the Lost World then and now. Let us carry on the legacy our ancestors left for us and by God's Grace, let us join hands in reaching the World for our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ!

Prayer

Heavenly Father, thank you for thinking of our small nations and bringing the gospel to the Cook Islands, the Pacific and across the entire world. Father, we thank you for those who sacrificed their lives like your son Jesus to bring us the good news. We pray that you continue to bless and keep the 5-fold ministry in the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry and for the edifying of the body of Christ. We love you Lord, thank you. Amen.

Arrival of Christianity by island

Aitutaki - 26 October 1821
Atiu - 19 July 1823
Mitiaro - 21 July 1823
Mauke - 23 July 1823
Rarotonga - 25 July 1823
Mangaia - 15 June 1824
Manihiki - 8 August 1849
Rakahanga - 15 August 1849
Penrhyn - 13 March 1857
Pukapuka, Nassau - 6 December 1857
Palmerston - 25 May 1863

18th April **Good Friday**
Rev. Daimon Mkandawire

The Cost of Redemption for Humanity and Creation

"He himself bore our sins in his body on the cross, so that, free from sins, we might live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed." (1 Peter 2:24)

Good Friday is a profound moment in the Christian story, marking the ultimate sacrifice of Jesus on the cross. This day invites us to remember the immense cost of redemption, not only for humanity but also for the entire creation. As Jesus bore the weight of our sins, he also bore the wounds of a broken world—a world groaning under the weight of ecological degradation and economic exploitation.

The crucifixion occurred within the context of a Roman empire driven by economic dominance and social inequality, where the vulnerable were easily crushed by systems of power and wealth. Jesus' execution was not merely a religious act but a political statement about the empire's violent domination. The economic realities of that time resonate today, where global economies often mirror similar injustices: environmental exploitation in pursuit of profit, growing inequalities, and marginalized communities suffering from the impacts of climate change.

We live in an era where the earth itself is being crucified. Our rampant consumerism and endless desire for economic growth come at a devastating cost: forests are cut down, species go extinct, and climate disasters increase in frequency, often hitting the poorest regions hardest. Creation, like Jesus, bears the scars of humanity's sin. Good Friday serves as a reminder that redemption is not only about our individual salvation but also about the healing of our economic systems and the restoration of the environment.

The cross is where the brokenness of the world intersects with God's grace. On this Good Friday, we must ask ourselves: What does it mean to live for righteousness in a world of environmental collapse and economic disparity? How can we, as followers of Christ, respond to the cry of creation and the needs of the poor? The healing Christ brings through his death on the cross is not limited to our souls—it encompasses the whole of creation. It calls us to act, to speak out against ecological and economic injustices, and to live as stewards of God's creation.

As we stand at the foot of the cross today, we recognize that the healing wounds of Christ are an invitation for us to participate in the work of renewal—for people and planet. The sacrifice of Jesus calls us to a deeper commitment to justice, sustainability, and the flourishing of all creation.

Prayer

Loving God, on this day of deep sorrow and reflection, help us to remember the cost of redemption. May we honor Christ's sacrifice by working towards justice for the earth and its people, healing what is broken and bringing hope to your creation. Amen.

20th April **Easter**

Rev. Mataafa Palenapa Sauaso

Hope Amidst Hardship

"But Sarah saw the son of Hagar the Egyptian, whom she had borne to Abraham, playing with her son Isaac." (Genesis 21:9)

Genesis 21 highlights the themes of divine intervention, grace, and hope amidst hardship. The story of Hagar and Ishmael offers a profound illustration of how God's promises and mercy extend beyond the boundaries of our expectations and limitations.

God had promised Abraham and Sarah a child despite their old age. Sarah, initially doubting the feasibility of this promise, arranged for her slave Hagar to bear a child for Abraham, resulting in the birth of Ishmael.

Sarah's eventual fulfillment of the promise with the birth of Isaac led to tension and jealousy. Sarah's insecurity regarding her son's status and inheritance prompted her to demand that Hagar and Ishmael be cast out.

As Hagar and Ishmael faced dire circumstances in the wilderness, God's intervention was evident. Despite their seemingly hopeless situation, God provided a miraculous source of water, symbolizing life and divine care.

The story underscores God's unwavering grace and provision for those in need, even in the most desperate situations. Hagar and Ishmael's story serves as a reminder of God's attentive care and the promise of sustenance and hope.

The narrative's message is still relevant today. In moments of abandonment or exclusion, we are encouraged to trust in God's presence and provision. It also calls us to extend compassion and support to those who are marginalized or suffering.

Like Hagar and Ishmael, we are not alone in our struggles. God's provision and care are constants, urging us to be sources of hope and encouragement for others.

As we celebrate the spirit of resurrection, we are reminded of the transformative power of overcoming adversity and embracing hope. The resurrection of Jesus Christ symbolizes not only victory over death but also the assurance that God is present and active in our lives, especially during challenging times.

God's promise is to be with us in our times of need, providing support and reassurance. As followers of this divine promise, our calling is to reach out to those who are struggling or feeling isolated. We are to encourage them, reminding them that they are not alone, for God has provided everything necessary for their wellbeing.

In our efforts to support others, we reflect the love and compassion that God shows to us. Let us be a beacon of hope and a source of comfort to those who need it most, embodying the divine care that assures us all that we are never truly alone.

Jesus' life exemplifies the ultimate act of love and redemption. His crucifixion was not the end but a powerful testament to His commitment to humanity. Through His resurrection, He demonstrated victory over sin and death, offering hope and reconciliation to all.

Prayer

God of hope, love, and justice, allow your victorious resurrection to shine upon those who have suffered due to various circumstances.

May your peace and righteousness resolve conflicts and difficulties faced by those who are mistreated and neglected. Amen.

27th April **Missionary History in Vanuatu**

Mrs Roslyne Keleb

God's Powerful Word Brings About Transformation in Vanuatu

"Then he said to me, 'Prophesy to these bones and say to them, 'O dry bones, hear the word of the LORD... So I prophesied as I was commanded; and as I prophesied, suddenly there was a noise, a rattling, and the bones came together, bone to its bone. I looked, and there were sinews on them and flesh had come upon them, and skin had covered them; but there was no breath in them... I prophesied as he commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they lived, and stood on their feet, a vast multitude.' " (Ezekiel 37:4, 7-8, 10)

John Charlotte Geddie landed at Aneityum on 29 July 1848. At the time the church began in Vanuatu, people were almost in the darkness.

On that day he began his journal. Here is part of John Geddie's first entry in the journal; he speaks of Aneityum: "This is truly one of the dark places of the earth, and all the abominations of heathenism are sometimes tempted to say, 'Can these dry bones live?' But we know that the gospel must be 'preached to every culture, that Christ shall have the heathen for his inheritance and the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession, and that all things are possible with God.' May the time to favor this dark island soon arrive." [Misi Gete p.31].

Mr Geddie wrote about Psalm 2:8. These islands are certainly at the uttermost parts of the earth; he believed that the Son had asked His father for the people of the South Pacific as part of His promised inheritance. Mr Geddie also believed that the inheritance which the Father had promised, and which the Son had asked for, would be granted.

So, the church begins. It was given by the Father to the Lord Jesus because He purchased it by His saving death upon the Cross.

In today's reading, God ordered prophet Ezekiel to prophesy to the dry bones. The dry bones hear the powerful word of God spoken by the prophet, and it brings transformation to them and brings them to life.

God is so powerful that He can take a spiritually dead heart and make it alive. God is also love. Salvation is a demonstration of God's love, His desire to transform us until the day of Christ. He cares for us and loves us so much that He wants to continue to change us from the inside out.

The missionaries use God's word to transform life and cultures, to baptize people, and bring people to Christ. Most of the islands have an understanding about who the High God is and what He does for his people.

They learn from a study of the culture of the Efatese tribes of the central islands that many of the ancestors had a traditional knowledge of who supwe (God in their language) was and what he required of men.

Later, they believed that supwe was the creator of all things, the only living and true God. He was good to his people and created every thing for their benefit, trees and wild-cane for their feasts. Supwe placed healing medicine in certain trees and leaves in times of sickness. He taught the people that God was their fountain of life, giving them their babies, healing their sick, and giving life after death.

God's word has the power to transform us. The renewing of our minds refers to filling our mind and heart with God's truth. When we spend more time studying and applying truth, we are changed.

Prayer

Thank you, Father, for your word spoken to us today. I pray for friends who have had the opportunity today to reflect on this thought. Please do not allow this word to be removed from their hearts. Continue to bless them that they may listen to the Holy Spirit's work in them. May they be free from all unrighteousness and have their trust in you. Point us to Jesus who died and rose again to save us from our sins.

We pray all this in Jesus' name. Amen.

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4th May **Mission**

Rev. Dr Jason Boyd

Transforming Smooth Stones

"Saul clothed David with his armour: he put a bronze helmet on his head and clothed him with a coat of mail. David strapped Saul's sword over the armour, and he tried in vain to walk, for he was not used to them. Then David said to Saul, 'I cannot walk with these; for I am not used to them.' So David removed them. Then he took his staff in his hand, and chose five smooth stones from the wadi, and put them in his shepherd's bag, in the pouch; his sling was in his hand, and he drew near to the Philistine... David put his hand in his bag, took out a stone, slung it, and struck the Philistine on his forehead; the stone sank into his forehead, and he fell face down on the ground." (1 Samuel 17:38-40, 49)

"Rise to life: Together in Transformation" was the mission challenge with which we wrestled at the CWM Assembly 2024, in Durban. I heard the Goliaths bellow: giants of ecological and economic injustice, of racism and restitution for the agonies of the slave trade, and the cry for gender justice. The people I met, the stories I heard, the hopefulness of those who have least reason for hope, have placed smooth stones in my hand.

Slaying Goliath with a slingshot is by faith in God who chooses the last and the least to bring all that threatens life to its knees.

One thing is clear: God wins the battle not by military might. David could not bear the weight of Saul's armour. Our world cannot bear the weight of wars waged around the globe.

Yet, the hard reality is that even the smooth stones are "weapons" in David's sling. This is the part of the story I find so hard. There is still death. There is gruesome decapitation.

Is it possible to move beyond the violence to imagine the smooth stones as small acts of peace-making? What would happen if we defeated evil with good; hate with love, through God who acts; God who defeats violence through the death and resurrection of Jesus.

Take time to name your "Goliaths." What are the smooth stones that God has placed in your hand? Is it possible for our smooth stones to bring life and peace instead of perpetuating death through violence?



Mission

Prayer

Lord, defeat our Goliaths with your goodness and unfailing, faithful love. We thank you for Jesus who showed us that death is not the end and through his resurrection shows us how to rise to life each and every day. Amen.

11th May **Youth**

Ms Gwen Down

The Power of Quiet Faith

“But the Lord answered her, ‘Martha, Martha, you are worried and distracted by many things; there is need of only one thing. Mary has chosen the better part, which will not be taken away from her.’” (Luke 10:41-42)

As a young woman, I often find myself feeling overwhelmed by all the responsibilities and expectations placed on me. From college to social media, it feels like I need to be constantly doing something, achieving something, or being someone who is “enough.” The story of Mary and Martha reminds me that it is okay to take a step back and simply rest in God’s presence.

In this passage, Martha is busy hosting Jesus, making sure everything is perfect. Meanwhile, her sister Mary chooses to sit at Jesus’ feet, listening intently to His teaching. At first glance, I empathize with Martha. She is trying to be a good host and take care of everything! Why wouldn’t Jesus praise her hard work? Instead, He tells her that Mary has chosen what is better by focusing on Him, not the tasks.

As a youth, it is tempting to believe that our worth is tied to how much we accomplish. Whether it is the grades we get, the followers we have, or the goals we set, our culture encourages us to be “Marthas.” But Jesus reminds us that while these things may be important, they are not what define us. Our worth is found in the moments we spend with Him, resting and listening to His voice.

In a fast-paced world, it is important to learn from Mary. She understood the power of quiet faith—faith that is focused on Jesus, not on appearances or tasks. This is something we all need to practice, especially in our youth, when so many things demand our attention. Sitting at the feet of Jesus does not mean we are passive; it means we are intentionally choosing to prioritize what really matters.

Jesus’ love for Martha and Mary is the same love He has for us today. He does not want us to be consumed by our to-do lists or worry about how we measure up. Instead, He invites us to spend time with Him, to grow in His love, and to find peace in His presence.



As young women of faith, let us be more like Mary. Let us make time to pause, to listen, and to find our strength in the stillness that comes from being with Jesus.

Prayer

Lord, help me to pause amidst my busy life and sit at Your feet. Teach me to rest in Your presence, knowing that my worth comes from You and not from what I accomplish. May Your peace fill my heart and guide my steps. Amen.

18th May **Legacies of Slavery**

Ms Bianca Gallant

Words Matter

“Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened and the ears of the deaf unstopped. Then the lame shall leap like a deer, and the tongue of the speechless sing for joy.” (Isaiah 35:5)

Isaiah was one of the beloved books of Jesus. He often quoted it, because the central theme of this book is redemption. God is described in it as the savior of His people. Also in this text we read about the loveliness of God’s majesty.

God is coming so that the tongues of the speechless/dumb/dumb ones will shout and sing. Words and language are classic instruments of power and powerlessness. Words from the past must be spoken in order to allow the people who have been made unfree in body, but not in spirit, to be meaningful again and to make their voices heard.

But what if there is no room for those words (words that never get room for speaking out loud) that are, for example, in our underbelly? This is the place where emotions are mainly kept. A place where Black people who are not allowed to participate, because then things would go wrong. Because it would lead to the expression of perceived racism and exclusion.

When the only Black woman in our Dutch parliament spoke justifiably about the plight of marginalized people, when she pointed out that racism and discrimination is structural in our society, she was regularly called hysterical. Her words would not be true and her voice would contain too much emotion, so an attempt was made to put her aside. (She thankfully remained steadfast.)

Why are the “underbellies” of power allowed to speak out loud? Their images roll off the television screens every day. The voices of power, the white voices, get a lot of attention and well-founded or not, they are seen as truth, receive public attention, and have created a polarised society where the extreme right won the most seats in a progressive Netherlands.



injustice. Not to be outraged. When people of colour get angry, white people quickly think it's "going too far." The conversation takes a dangerous turn. Discomfort caused by standing up for law and justice is then confused with "danger." The distressing thing is that it is not the white man, but the other who is in danger. Danger in the form of job loss, loss of income, insecurity, or lack of a residence permit.

The question that remains is whether white people really dare to listen to voices that have been silent for so long and sometimes have not learned to speak out because of insecurity— and not because they can't.

Where do we allow God who says through Isaiah that "He opens the eyes of the blind and makes the ears of the deaf hear." What do we help in God's Kingdom to make the paralytic leap? And when we are the ones who make the voices that could not speak shout and sing again?

We meditate upon the words of Willem Barnard, Dutch theologian and poet, who wrote: "Thou man come out of open thy dead ears, Come out of the grave that unlocks you. Come out and be born."

Prayer

God of the lame, blind and deaf, thank you for Your Word, which is mighty, but used by people to make others powerless. Words matter, Mighty God. Let us use your Word to build bridges. Give peace in this world full of escalated misunderstandings, complicated fault lines, deeply ingrained prejudices, and hostility.

In Jesus' name, Amen.

25th May **Training-in-Mission**

Rev. Dylan Rhys Parry

The Youths are the Church Today

“Let no one despise your youth, but set the believers an example in speech and conduct, in love, in faith, in purity.” (1 Timothy 4:12)

Too often, I cringe when I hear people say, in reference to young people and children, “they are the future of the church.” While I don’t entirely disagree, I find it frustrating because, growing up, I constantly heard phrases like, “your time will come.” Essentially, it meant that older, more experienced people should handle the present work because I was “too young.” Even now, at 35 years old, and with over a decade of ministry experience, I still hear people say this to me.

Now, whenever I hear someone say, “they are the future of the church,” I feel compelled to challenge that idea. Young people aren’t just the future—they are here with us now. They are present, and every single person, whether young or old, has something valuable to contribute. We are all part of the body we call the church.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer, a German theologian said, “The youth is the future of the Church, yes—but they are also the Church of today.”

Bonhoeffer captures the balance of young people being both part of the present and the future of the church. Do we have that balance today within our churches and denominations? Or have the scales tipped in favour of a certain group?

This passage encourages us to embrace leadership and not feel disheartened. While it specifically addresses young people, its message can also resonate with other marginalized groups within the church, such as women and the LGBTQ+ community. The core idea is one of inclusion and empowerment for all who may feel sidelined.

We live in a time when TikTok and Instagram influencers are in the spotlight. The Collins Dictionary defines an influencer as “someone who can persuade a large number of people, particularly their social media followers, to do, buy, or use what they do.”

In essence, influencers serve as role models, which aligns perfectly with Paul’s exhortation to Timothy: “...set an example for the believers in speech, conduct, love, faith, and purity.”



What does it mean for us to be influencers of Christ within our CWM family and in our unique contexts today? Each of us has a voice, and this passage underscores the significance of being positive role models, regardless of our background, as we commit ourselves to serve in faith and in mission.

As a former TIM participant, I am grateful to CWM for helping me grow and empowering me to become an influencer of Christ today. In a world that is increasingly characterized by injustice and inequality, we are called to be ambassadors of God's love and peace in these situations. Through our speech, conduct, love, faith, and purity, we are all called to serve.

Prayer

We pray that everyone who feels sidelined today recognizes their role as influencers of Christ in their local contexts and in the world. As CWM family, may we continue to empower youth, women, children, and all those who are marginalized in their ministries. Amen.





1st June **Interfaith**

Rev. Dr Peter Colwell

The Way of Forgiveness and Reconciliation

"But Joseph said to them, 'Do not be afraid! Am I in the place of God? Even though you intended to do harm to me, God intended it for good, in order to preserve a numerous people, as he is doing today. So have no fear; I myself will provide for you and your little ones.' In this way he reassured them, speaking kindly to them." (Genesis 50.19-21)

Isaiah was one of the beloved books of Jesus. He often quoted it, because the central theme of this book is redemption. God is described in it as the saviour of His people. Also in this text we read about the loveliness of God's majesty.

The story of Joseph and his brothers is one that is very familiar to us. It is a famous story of sibling rivalry and triumph over adversity. What is often overlooked is the message of reconciliation, which ends the book of Genesis. And it is also a story that is revered not only by Jews and Christians but by Muslims as well. Now whilst many of the figures of the Old Testament are also revered in Islam (Adam, Abraham, Moses, Job, and Jonah) the story of Joseph is largely the same in the Qur'an, where Joseph becomes Yusuf.

Bishop Kenneth Cragg, a distinguished Christian commentator on Islam, spoke about how the Joseph story is something that Jews, Christians, and Muslims can explore together. How, despite the tensions, conflicts, and rivalries between these three "Abrahamic religions," there is at the core a message of reconciliation, mutual respect, and service.

In fact, we might also note that the flow of the book of Genesis is one of sibling rivalry, the arc of which bends towards forgiveness and reconciliation.

The conflict between Cain and Abel, resulting in the first murder in the Bible, the tensions between Jacob and Essau, and finally between Joseph and his brothers, are the essential "tent pegs" of the book of Genesis.

In addition, there is also the back story of the sibling alienation between Isaac and Ishmael that has come to symbolise the rivalry between the Judeo-Christian tradition and the Islamic one, Ishmael being seen as the father of the Arab people.

The world of today can seem bewildering and frightening with all the conflict, fear, and bloodshed that is around. Some of that involves actors who claim their violent actions in the name of religion, and at the present time a good deal of focus is around the relationship between Jews, Christians, and Muslims, particularly in the Holy Land and the wider Middle East.

Across Europe there has been a significant rise in hate crime against Jews and Muslims, with some on the far right claiming to be “defending” Europe’s Christian heritage.

People of faith, however are called to take the road “less travelled:” it is the road of Joseph, who, in spite of all the harm inflicted upon him by his brothers, chose the path of reconciliation, overcoming fear, and reaching out with reassurance and practical help and support. Even though different religions may disagree on so much, God calls us to do that which is loving and merciful, for that is at the very core of what it means to walk in the light of God.

For Christians, the story of Joseph also foreshadows the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, who overcame hatred and enmity with forgiveness and love, even amidst his own torment on the cross. In imitation of this is how we truly live in the light of God’s presence.

Prayer

Liberating God,
Open wide to us the sea of your inexhaustible love,
that we might see you in our neighbour,
Befriending the stranger,
Welcoming the despised,
Cancelling all enmity,
So that the whole of creation
Might dance in your presence.
Amen.

8th June **Women's Empowerment for Evangelism**

Rev. Dr Fion Sin

Empowering Women Through Education

*“Greet Prisca and Aquila, who work with me in Christ Jesus, and who risked their necks for my life, to whom not only I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles.”
(Romans 16:3-4)*

The New Testament features the remarkable Prisca, a woman of spiritual maturity and profound understanding of the faith. She played a pivotal role in establishing the early church, exemplifying the potentials of:

“Empowerment” — considered to be a means for creating social environment in which vital decisions and choices may be made to bring social transformation. It strengthens the innate ability through acquiring knowledge, power, and experience. The empowerment of women has become one of the important issues of present times.¹

The name Prisca means “valuable,” “historic,” or “honourable.” Aquila was her husband; both names were Roman names. This couple were the first missionaries and leaders of the early church, who met the Apostle Paul, working and preaching the gospel together.

The names Prisca and Aquila appear together six times in the New Testament, and of these six times, Prisca was mentioned first on four of these occasions. This has a very important spiritual significance.

Prisca, the wife, was more active than her husband Aquila in the life and ministry of the church. She played a more prominent and important role. Paul valued Prisca as a coworker and she undoubtedly brought glory to the life and ministry of her husband Aquila.

“Education” — a milestone for women's empowerment because it enables them to respond to challenges, to confront their traditional role and changes to their life. It assists in bringing equality and works as a means to improve their status within the family, society, and politico-economic system.²



Though Prisca was a woman, she and her husband Aquila knew the truth of the gospel and had considerable spiritual influence. They helped and educated Apollos, who was great in learning, fiery in heart, and with outstanding talent, in a fitting manner for his lack of experience in preaching.

Prisca and Aquila had a close relationship with Paul. They were excellent coworkers and close friends. They were even prepared to risk their own lives to save Paul in the face of danger. Paul was extremely grateful to them and also expressed gratitude of the Gentile churches. They served the Lord faithfully for the sake of the Gospel.

In the development of the early Church, Paul was a Jewish man, a Pharisee, who, as a missionary worker, easily accepted Prisca, a female coworker. His perspective focused on the ministry of the gospel. Aquila also calmly supported Prisca, his wife, who was progressively surpassing herself in her serving, and gave her the freedom to serve.

Prayer

Pray that the perspective of our serving be focused on Jesus Christ. Be willing to be a help to others for the sake of the gospel. Glorify the name of our Lord. Amen.

1. Dr. Neelmani Jaysawal and Dr. Sudeshna Saha; Role of education in women empowerment. <https://doi.org/10.22271/allresearch.2023.v9.i4a.10710>
2. Dr. Neelmani Jaysawal and Dr. Sudeshna Saha; Role of education in women empowerment. <https://doi.org/10.22271/allresearch.2023.v9.i4a.10710>

15th June **Decolonising Mission**

Dr Xolani Maseko

Humility

"If then there is any encouragement in Christ, any consolation from love, any sharing in the Spirit, any compassion and sympathy... and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." (Philippians 2:1-11)

This passage of scripture is known as the Kenotic Hymn. This is a Greek term for self-emptying. Something that Jesus, though he was God, humbled himself to be a human. As a human being he was obedient to his father. This is the model of the mission of the church and that of discipleship. The answers to questions of a true church and true discipleship derive from this model – "kenosis." Paul wrote this letter to encourage believers who were undergoing pain and persecution amongst other challenges. Though our context is different, we still face our own challenges, pain, and persecution.

We live in a world where power relations and dynamics are the causes of conflict and strife. At the family level they lead to the high percentage of marital separation and divorce. And at the international level we see a lot of suffering caused by war. This is fuelled by the international relations of power and imperialistic tendencies and policies.

Is it not possible for the world to learn from the humility of Christ? Similarly, if the church is to be true to being missional, the kenotic theology must shape her ministry. To ministers who are in conflict with their local churches, they must learn from Jesus Christ. As an individual Christian, if you are to be true to your calling, you must learn humility and servanthood from Jesus Christ.

One thing that makes humility very difficult is that it is often identified as weakness. It ought not to be so. We must learn from Christ who after a life and ministry of obedience was lifted up, and his name became very great such that all worship is due him. As such humility is one of the chief Christian virtues, if not the most precious of them all.

As we reflect on this hymn of Philippians 2, let us pray for the virtue and ethic of humility to fill us, to guide the way we do relationships and raise our families. Let us pray for countries of the world to be guided by this ethic in all international relations and conflict resolutions.



Remember the word of the Lord that tells us to humble ourselves, and in due season, the Lord will lift us up. Let humility be our disposition as children of God in this society and age.

Prayer

God Almighty, we thank you for the example of your son our Lord Jesus Christ. May his character of ministry and ethic of humility fill our souls, permeate the society and guide us in all power relations. This is possible, by the Holy Spirit who dwells in us. Help us by your Spirit to model a life of humility to others, our families, and the world around us.

This we pray in the name of the Father, of the Son, and the Holy Spirit, Amen.

22nd June **Youth and Spiritualities**
Mr Enoch Kao

St-humble Like a Child

“At that time the disciples came to Jesus and asked, ‘Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?’ He called a child, whom he put among them, and said, ‘Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Whoever becomes humble like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. Whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me.’” (Matthew 18:1-5)

When I was little, I always dreamed of becoming an adult. To me, being a grownup was cool as I would get to sleep late, earn lots of money to buy myself a decent house, and enjoy all sorts of freedom. Some years have passed, and I realized that apart from sleep deprivation, adulthood didn’t seem to be as rewarding as the little me imagined.

Quite the opposite: I have responsibilities—and problems—in studies, work, interpersonal relationships, spiritual life, and so on. I am sure that, as a youth myself, I can relate to what many of my peers are facing: we live in a world of emerging turbulences and ambiguities, and where life is full of toxic competition and oppression; we see injustice and derogation across hierarchies; we’re fed up with the un-constructive, biased criticisms about “kids nowadays” that come with absurd expectations or even emotional blackmail, sucking out our mental and spiritual stamina.

I believe many Christian youths actually do have bold aspirations, but the world around us is sometimes just so disappointing and disoriented that, at some point, we stop seeing the “purpose” and become lost too.

In the scripture, Jesus intends us to “become like children.” The first thing that popped up on my mind was a toddler holding the mother’s hands and waddling back and forth.

Children trip, children fall, children get lost, children cry, children need protection—children are helpless—so they turn to the parents whom they trust, and let themselves be carried to wherever their guardians wish.

I want to encourage all my fellow youths who are reading this: it’s okay to not be okay! As we become adults, we may be overwhelmed by responsibilities, we experience ups and downs, we start to realize the sin and darkness prevailing on this Earth, but never feel alone because when you look up, God is holding your hands tightly even when you fall

backwards. More importantly, just as all mothers have been toddlers before and know their children's struggles, Jesus, God in living flesh, endured and understands our struggles and agony too.

So, remember, don't try to look for the oil for your lamp from the world; it's God's grace and faithfulness which fuel us and make life flourish!

Nonetheless, Jesus also emphasized that we need to "change" first to become like children. Perhaps as we age and accumulate experience, knowledge, and power, pride sneaks in and we gradually forget about humility.

No matter if you're a respected minister with high authority, or an ordinary teenager who attends Saturday fellowship, no one is ever faultless or more/less worthy to God. It's important that we humbly admit our weaknesses and faults, and let God change our prideful mindset and ways of living, lest we keep falling into the temptation of upholding our ego and disparaging those who think or act differently than us.

Only when we allow God to transform us will we be able to bring about the transformation with which we are entrusted.

Prayer

May You, who have been accompanying us with unfailing love, change us and make us become children again. Although the world we live in is truly agonizing, we believe in Your faithfulness and grace. We humble ourselves, and pray that You transform us, and the world through us! Amen.

29th June **Youth and Social Justice**

Ms Anita Chang

Refocusing on an Intergenerational Perspective of Mission

“Religion that is pure and undefiled before God, the Father, is this: to care for orphans and widows in their distress, and to keep oneself unstained by the world.” (James 1:27)

In this passage, James specifies the ideals for those who claim to hold to the Christian faith. Religion is not defined by actions such as rituals or rules, but actions that care for the marginalised, while keeping oneself set apart from the evils of the world. The distinction here between the two sets of actions that represent true faith is whether or not it springs from an undefiled heart that is only known by ourselves and God.

Although the passage here only specifically mentions orphans and widows as those who we should care for, they are representing those who are the powerless, voiceless, and marginalised in the society; it is likely that no one would step up and support them, and they have little to no agency over their own affairs.

In our current context, it could be individuals that are overlooked because of their identities, or people groups that are oppressed because of their race and culture. It could also be our damaged environment, or nations that are left isolated and suffering because of intimidation from neighbouring countries and oppressive governments.

Furthermore, it could also represent the youths that are facing socio-economic pressure, as well as high expectations from society as they are relied upon for changes to happen. To expect them to be the change for society today is not always a form of empowerment, but can be a source of further pressure.

We ought to avoid tokenism that looks to youth as the sole source of future change in our world. The change of heart requires that we are all, young and old, called to care for the orphans and widows, and that this responsibility can only spring from an undefiled heart.



In May 2024, Taiwan experienced one of its largest social protests because of the public's fear that legislation that was about to be passed would corrupt democracy in Taiwan. The Presbyterian Church in Taiwan stepped in as a platform for older supporters to relay resources and aid to the younger protesters.

The endeavour eventually turned into a missional testimony similar to the "feeding the five thousand" story in the Bible where abundant resources kept flowing in to support those taking actions.

This miracle was possible because both old and young supporters had the same vision and heart for justice, even though they had different roles in this protest.

Similarly, we too can reconcile between looking to the youth for certain roles to make changes in the society, yet not creating pressure for them to fight this battle alone, if our church can have a shared missional vision on how to care for the widows and the orphans that springs from hearts that are unstained by the world.

Prayer

Lord, please bless our youths as they challenge empire, inequality, and oppression, speaking truth and justice in love. May our elders have wisdom to support youth in ways that are pleasing to You. Guide us in caring for those in need, and keep old and young unstained by this ever-changing world.

Yours is the glory, Amen.





6th July **Creation Care**

Ms Miho You

Daily Life and An Inclusive Society for All

“The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly.” (John 10:10)

Jesus contrasted Himself with the thief. The thief destroys, but Jesus brings flourishing life. Are we thieves, or are we disciples of Jesus? When we consider the concept of the “ecological footprint,” which reveals the impact of our lives on the Earth, we see that we consume resources meant to last a year in just seven months. For the remaining five months, we are stealing from future generations and nature.¹

This overconsumption of natural capital is intensifying deforestation, soil erosion, loss of biodiversity, and the accumulation of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere. It also exacerbates climate inequality, increases extreme weather events, reduces food production, and worsens conflicts over resources.

In the end, we are not simply borrowing but stealing. As seen in the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change 6th Assessment Report, this crisis is unequivocally the responsibility of humanity and poses a significant threat to the poor, future generations, and other living beings.²

Jesus’ “abundant life” refers to harmonious coexistence with all creation. It is not about material excess but rather a life-flourishing creation and economy that reflects the following three aspects:

1. Recognition of interconnectedness with all creation.
2. Living for others and creatures beyond individualism.
3. Promoting sustainability and justice in the economic system.

Specific examples of actions we can take include:

- Reducing carbon emissions through the expanded use of renewable energy and improved energy efficiency.
- Adopting sustainable agricultural practices to enhance soil health and protect biodiversity.



- Introducing circular economy models for resource recycling and waste reduction.
- Purchasing fair trade products to protect producers' rights and revitalize local economies.
- Participating in ecosystem restoration projects, such as community gardens, to restore natural habitats.
- Expanding the use of green transportation to reduce air pollution.
- Participating in local food movements to reduce food mileage and support local agriculture.
- Fostering ecotourism to balance ecosystem conservation with local economic development.
- Improving urban ecosystems and quality of life through green infrastructure construction.
- Strengthening corporate social responsibility through sustainable investment and environmental, social, and governance management practices.
- Good examples of these implementations are already emerging. This is like the new thing God is doing, making a way in the wilderness and streams in the wasteland (Isaiah 43:19). How am I, and the community I belong to, embodying creation where life flourishes with a sustainable economy?

Prayer

Lord, do not let our daily lives become theft that destroys Your creation, but instead, let them be lives that contribute to the flourishing of all creatures. Help us to see the impact our choices have on the Earth and all living beings, so that we may reduce our ecological footprint and work towards a just and sustainable economy. Amen.

1. <https://overshoot.footprintnetwork.org/newsroom/country-overshoot-days>, including differences by country
2. Summary for Policymakers <https://www.ipcc.ch/report/ar6/syr/summary-for-policymakers>

13th July **Gender and Militarisation**

Mrs Van Lal Hming Sangi

If I Perish, I Perish

"Mordecai told them to reply to Esther, 'Do not think that in the king's palace you will escape any more than all the other Jews. For if you keep silence at such a time as this, relief and deliverance will rise for the Jews from another quarter, but you and your father's family will perish. Who knows? Perhaps you have come to royal dignity for just such a time as this.' Then Esther said in reply to Mordecai, 'Go, gather all the Jews to be found in Susa, and hold a fast on my behalf, and neither eat nor drink for three days, night or day. I and my maids will also fast as you do. After that I will go to the king, though it is against the law; and if I perish, I perish.'" (Esther 4: 13-16)

There are a number of stories in the Bible where violation, oppression in terms of religion, communalism, and of course patriarchal ideology turn finally into militarization. The story of Esther, is an example of collective resistance to Haman, who holds the highest position in the kingdom. When Haman finds out that Mordecai is Jewish, he successfully persuades the king to enact a decree to destroy all the Jews.

In this story we see an incitement of violence, a call to protest the injustices of human law, and dismantle oppressive institutional structures, be it Persian supremacy, patriarchy, empire, and so on.

We learn from the book of Esther that power lies in collective resistance. Chapter 4:16 indicates that without community there is no freedom from hardship to construct a new and peaceful society. The wit of Mordecai and the boldness of Esther show the power of collective resistance including all the Jews and the queen's maids too!

This can be recognized as part of protests in recent years from Chile to Hong Kong, France to Sudan and Bangladesh to Myanmar – the collective resistance of the people has been evidenced around the world.

Returning to the book of Esther, it seems things can't get any worse for Mordecai when Haman successfully persuades the king to enact a decree to destroy all the Jews.

At a crucial moment in the story, Mordecai is quick to point out: "Do not think to yourself that in the king's palace you will escape any more than all the other Jews" (4:13).

Mordecai uses his wisdom that if Esther remains silent, “deliverance for the Jews will arise from another place.” Then he wonders aloud, “Who knows, maybe you’ve become queen for this very moment!”

Esther responds with bravery, “If I perish, I perish,” and she decides to approach the king.

God raises up Mordecai and Esther to protect and propel his plan for his people and his plan of redemption for his people regardless of gender differentiation.

Esther becomes the heroin of the story to protect her own people from bloodshed by fasting, praying, and facing the warrior king of Persia.

She dares to die for her people, sacrificing her life and using her wisdom to save all the Jews in a diplomatic way of conversations, dialogue, and engagement with Persian king and she finally gets victory for all her people.

Prayers

- To prevail a long-lasting peace and democracy and rest in the hands of the people in Myanmar.
- To protect the innocent people from the hands of military coups.

18th July **CWM Sunday**

Rev. Julie Sim

God's Future Today

"So when they had come together, they asked him, 'Lord, is this the time when you will restore the kingdom to Israel?' He replied, 'It is not for you to know the times or periods that the Father has set by his own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.'" (Acts 1:6-8)

The hymn "God's Future Today" was written by the Rev. Fred Kaan for the tenth anniversary of the Council for World Mission in 1987 in Hong Kong. Rev. Kaan, who was the chairperson of the Council for World Mission, dedicated this hymn to the German theologian Jürgen Moltmann. The second stanza of the hymn exhorts,

"We rise and we risk
the course God has set
to care for our world,
a world of 'not yet';
at one with the Spirit,
we follow Christ's way
and put into practice
God's future today."

Today marks the 48th anniversary of the Council for World Mission since its formation on 18 July 1977.

If "God's Future Today" is sung as a new hymn today, how should we respond to the call to put God's future into practice? What is God's future? As a partnership of churches with a justice-oriented missional calling, CWM envisions God's future as life-flourishing for all.

In this partnership, member churches are encouraged to share their resources of ideas, people, and finances, so that they may mutually challenge each other to go beyond themselves in service to others for the mission of God.

Through a process of challenge and journeying together, CWM member churches will learn from each other and equip one another in their common missional calling to be the church for the world.



The key biblical passage that forms the basis of CWM's understanding of itself as a partnership of churches in mission is found in the Book of Acts 1:6-8.

In this passage, the concern of the disciples about the restoration of the kingdom to Israel is transformed into a missional call that embraces the whole world beginning with Jerusalem.

Two important observations can be made.

Firstly, the disciples ask Jesus, "Is this the time when you will restore the kingdom to Israel?" Jesus replies, "It is not for you to know the times or periods that the Father has set by his own authority." Although Jesus indicates that the timing of the coming of the kingdom is not the disciples' concern, he does not challenge the premise that the framework of mission is God's promise of a new heaven and a new earth.

Secondly, Jesus reminds the disciples, "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you." This clearly reminds us that the primary agent of mission is not the church but God the Holy Spirit, who is the guiding and empowering presence of God.

The corporate logo of CWM creatively depicts the concept of God's Spirit as the agent of mission. It features a dove on the left and a light blue globe on the right, with a white cross and the word "CWM" on it.

This symbolizes the spirit of God (dove) leading the world mission (globe). We hope and pray that the spirit of God will continue to hover over the whole world, empowering the partnership of churches in the current ecumenical movement to put into practice God's future today!

Prayer

God, our creator, enlarge our devotion as we humbly vow to pursue your future today. We pause to give thanks and focus our thoughts on how far you have brought us.

We pause to affirm our commitment to your call and pursue your future: a flourishing life for all, Amen!

20th July **Church in Action**

Rev. Wezi Manda

Feed Them Yourselves

“Jesus said to them, ‘They need not go away. You give them something to eat.’ They replied, ‘We have nothing here but five loaves and two fish.’ And he said, Bring them here to me.’” (Matthew 14:16-18)

In Matthew 14:13 we are met with the story of the feeding of the five thousand, which in the actual sense were more, for the number did not include the women and children.

It goes on to say that the area in which Jesus, the disciples and the crowds were was remote. Hence the only option which the disciples thought of and they made known to Jesus was to dismiss the people so that they could attend to their material needs.

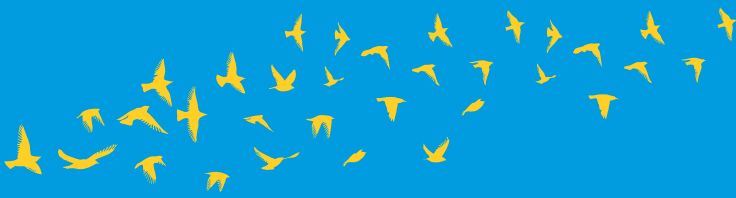
Let us remember that these are people who followed Jesus because they had a need. And he healed those who were sick. Knowing what these people were after, and the responsibility of the disciples, Jesus had a different answer for them: he told the disciples to provide for the people.

The Church today, in most cases and places, has lost its influence, authority, and power, simply because on many occasions we have underestimated what we have. We have stopped being the salt of the earth and the light of the world (Matthew 5:13).

“Feed them yourselves” is an invitation of the church to take up ownership. It is an invitation for the church to restore its place in the community. It is an invitation to action-oriented Gospel. While other churches are trying to do what they can, others still feel they cannot do anything about the situations in their communities.

This is not so much about providing food and drink to the hungry; it is also about being available for the people when they need us – the church. It is not about how much we have, but how much willing and ready we are to be part of people’s lives.

Like the disciples, we tend to be so preoccupied with how the little that we have cannot help in the Mission Outreach programs. Hence, we quickly begin to look outside ourselves for support. But then in this passage of scripture, we are being reminded of how just a little is much when God is in it.



Allow me to conclude with a greeting and encouragement from Sharon Rosehall Congregational Church—the smallest church among the Corentyne Group of Churches in Guyana. It is a church of not more than 20 members and with an average attendance on each Sunday being 8-12 members. It took one message to reach out to the community to learn that this small church has consistently contributed the little they have to practically share God's love to the elderly and poor in the community of Rosehall.

Are you at a place where you think there is nothing you can do? Well, Jesus demonstrated to His disciples and the crowds that, we the church are the solutions to the challenges the people are faced with.

Let us look at where we are and what is within us. Then let us go out and be present in the affairs of the people to God's own glory.

Prayer

Heavenly Father, Our Provider, we sincerely thank you for all you have provided unto us. Continue to speak in our lives so that we and our resources shall be reasons for someone to celebrate your faithfulness. We pray for Corentyne Group of Churches in Guyana, for the Frank Memorial and Rosehall Congregational Church's community outreach programs and all those who are making efforts in reaching out to your people. Through these and many others, may Your love be experienced in Jesus' name. Amen.

27th July **Spiritualities**

Ms Jung So Young

A Spiritual Life Focused on Jesus in a Busy World

“Then Jesus told his disciples, ‘If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it.’” (Matthew 16:24-25)

There is a Korean song called “Gasinamu” (The Thorn Tree). This song was written and composed by Ha Deok-gyu, a singer-songwriter who later became a minister. The lyrics reflect his spiritual struggles and inner conflicts, and one of the lines says, “There are too many of me inside myself, leaving no place for you to rest.” This song resonates deeply with many and continues to be widely sung today.

I greatly enjoy my work, driven by a strong sense of calling, yet at times, I feel somewhat overwhelmed by the flood of emails, the responsibilities of pastoral care, time management, and the pressure to bear fruit in ministry. Many of you might have experienced something similar. Gordon MacDonald, in his book “Ordering Your Private World,” warns that neglecting our inner lives can lead to burnout, stress, and a loss of purpose.

So, how can we bring order to our inner world? How can we sift through the jumble of thoughts and emotions that dominate our minds? Perhaps we should place our relationship with God as the highest priority. What if we recognised that our thoughts and vision are limited, and surrendered our own will, fixing our eyes on Jesus, who knows us better than we know ourselves, and made seeking God’s will and wisdom our priority?

By doing so, we can root our lives in what truly matters. The key is to focus on Jesus. Proverbs 3:5-6 teaches us to trust in the Lord with all our heart and not lean on our own understanding.

We often think we know ourselves well, but in reality, there are many times when we do not.



spend time communicating with God. When we reflect the Word of God in a way that suits us daily, and offer ourselves as living sacrifices through Sunday worship, God will provide the spiritual nourishment and direction we need.

In doing so, our hearts will be reordered, and we will find peace, courage, and strength to continue our journey of faith, even in this chaotic world.

Prayer

Lord, we confess that we have been burdened by thoughts and emotions shaped by our limited perspective rather than seeing through Your eyes. Help us open our spiritual eyes so that, in this journey of faith, we may trust in You and not rely on our own understanding, and fix our eyes on You, making You the standard for our thoughts, emotions, and lives.

In Jesus' name, Amen.





3rd August **Education**

Dr Joan Reid

Education: Learning and Growing Through Knowledge in Christ

“Keep hold of instruction; do not let go; guard her, for she is your life.” (Proverbs 4:13)

We are being taught by this proverb to listen to instructions, as instructions bring life. Everything that we need to know, must be learnt. Whatever is right should add to our knowledge and therefore must be kept securely. Life depends on being corrected from error that may cause destruction and in knowing the truth of how to live life more abundantly.

One must always grasp with understanding, never letting go. Letting go could prove detrimental. Why do parents, pastors, and other teachers use so much repetition? It is often necessary as most hearers are lazy, stubborn, and easily distracted. Sometimes hearers do not appreciate instructions, and therefore they do not make the effort, or take the steps, necessary to follow them. Effective learning requires attention, submission, retention, and application.

It is wise to pay attention to what is heard and not let it slip away. This means humbling self to those who are teachers, whether they are God, parents, pastors, or others. A wise man craves instruction so he can be wiser (Proverb: 1:5; 9:9; 12:1). Fools despise the word to their own ruin. When you find good teachers, listen, and learn everything you can from them.

Note that the instruction of wisdom will save you from the dilemmas and dangers of life. If you were drowning at sea, would you obey the words from the sailor in a rescue boat? You would, for the consequences of not obeying would be certain death.

You may never face drowning at sea, but you will face drowning in the sea of life, when the storms of a foolish and sinful world affect you. Following wise instructions will help you survive the storms of life. God has instructed you through parents, pastors, and His word. You must listen to the instructions, grasp with understanding—and not let them slip away.



tight. Don't let it go or sell it for any price.

Knowledge is acquired through experience or education. One must be engaged wholeheartedly in acquiring these through active hearts and minds and be committed to learning and growing in knowledge and wisdom through Christ.

Prayer

Dear Lord, we stand in awe of your majestic power. As your children we pray for wisdom and understanding. Please illuminate our paths and guide us according to Your perfect will. Help us to acknowledge You in all we do, so that You can direct our paths.

In Jesus' name, Amen.

10th August **Growth & Advancement**

Rev. Dr Lungile Mpetsheni

Enabling Life-Flourishing Communities: Growth and Advancement

"A Samaritan woman came to draw water, and Jesus said to her, 'Give me a drink.' (His disciples had gone to the city to buy food.) The Samaritan woman said to him, 'How is it that you, a Jew, ask a drink of me, a woman of Samaria?' (Jews do not share things in common with Samaritans.) Jesus answered her, 'If you knew the gift of God and who it is that is saying to you, 'Give me a drink,' you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water.' "

(John 4:7-10)

In this passage, we see Jesus Christ transcending and helping a Samaritan to transcend human-made, life-denying stereotypes, limitations, and discriminatory practices. Jesus promoted growth and development, towards life-flourishing communities.

The division of the kingdom is recorded in 1 Kings 12-2 Kings 17 and 2 Chronicles 10-38. The division was occasioned by the weakening faith of the people in God and the engagement in the idolatrous worship of other gods, especially those of the Zidonians, Moabites, and Ahijah. It was further caused by poor discernment, the selfishness, and the feeding of the egos by the leadership, especially Jeroboam and Rehoboam.

The arbitrary division led to animosity between the two kingdoms. The relations between the south and the north became sour. From the passage, we learn that Jesus met this adverse situation in his encounter with the Samaritan woman. A thirsty Jesus, in a foreign land, asked for water, a source of life. The woman was concerned about the relations between the two nations. Jesus wanted to bridge the gap and promote relations that would contribute to better life for all. We should work with Jesus Christ to heal the relations which are broken deliberately by the empire. There is much value in relations.

The broken relations affect the provision of services and the sharing of resources. The Samaritan woman could not do the basic thing, give water to Jesus – provide service and share the resource. If water is life, the woman denied Jesus the right to life. What would it



take her to share the resource? Did it warrant the discussion? Why is there so much red tape intra and internationally when it comes to the provision of services and the sharing of resources?

The 1884-85 Berlin Conference to partition Africa into what is now 54 states remains the factor regarding the growth and development in Africa. Africans view each other as foreigners in the African land. They called each other names, leading to acts of xenophobia, just because we cannot share the resources.

The global apartheid continues to perpetuate the divisions between the global north and global south. There is a scramble for resources, with the underdeveloped countries struggling to reach levels of growth and development that would ensure life-flourishing communities.

Jesus transcended the barriers and helped the Samaritan women to get out of the stereotypes and the limitations of race and ethnicity. The woman had long existed under the spell of those who wanted to spoil the relations and work against the value of Ubuntu. Jesus restored full humanity – Ubuntu, which says, “I belong, therefore I am.” Without the other, I am not. She spread the good news.

Let us work to promote justice, growth, and development. Let us embrace the value of Ubuntu for an equitable socio-economic order.

Prayer

God of justice, who wills that humanity, and the rest of creation live in harmony and enjoy the good things that you have provided. We repent for our culpability in upholding systems of division, discrimination and dehumanisation. We commit ourselves to promote life-flourishing communities in which people live in peace, sharing the resources, and providing required services that enable growth and development. We pray in the name of Jesus Christ, the liberator and the developer. Amen.

17th August **The Offering of Life**

Rev. Prof. Graham Duncan

Faith is a Life Expressed in Love for Neighbour

"His master said to him, "Well done, good and trustworthy slave; you have been trustworthy in a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master."... But his master replied, "You wicked and lazy slave! You knew, did you, that I reap where I did not sow, and gather where I did not scatter?" (Matt 25:21-26)

In the parable in Matt 25:21-26, the first two slaves translate their vigilance into service, producing fruits from the Lord's gifts. The third slave is mean and fearful, he pretends to be on good terms with God without leaving his own comfort zone. He understands God in terms of rewards and punishment, so he does not take any risks due to his lack of trust. This is not faith – faith is a life which is expressed in love and service and gift to our neighbour. Being afraid is the demonstration of our lack of faith.

Now we come to ourselves. God has entrusted each of us with certain resources and gifts. These are to be used in his service and the service of those less blessed than ourselves. Most of us do give but on a conditional basis. First we meet our regular needs and commitments and then from what remains we give to God. That is playing it safe because we do not really trust in God to provide for us and all our many needs. In comparison, how many of us make our offerings to God the first call on our resources and then from what remains pay our bills? This is a very different kind of giving. So the question is, do we give to God as a priority or do we offer up the crumbs from our tables? This is a matter of integrity, affecting both others' and our own survival.

Within the traditional African context, at this stage we would normally have recourse to the value of ubuntu, but we should be careful of misusing this concept. Let Mandela himself explain:

"Our families are far larger than those of whites and it's always pure pleasure to be fully accepted throughout a village, district or even several districts occupied by your clan as a beloved household member, where you can call at any time, completely relax, sleep at ease and freely take part in the discussion of all problems, where you can even be given livestock and land to build free of charge."¹



This summarises the expectations and responsibilities of ubuntu which is commonly applied across the African context: “But his sense of responsibility did not end with them [his immediate family] although it was ‘the navel that links us together as a family;’² it extended to his sisters and to their children and to the children of kinsmen who had supported him.³”

Our urban areas are the places where we adopt western values which prevent or destroy ubuntu.

The key to ubuntu is that it normalizes solidarity, harmonious integration, and mutual respect rather than individuality. For Mandela’s ubuntu enabled the scope of this community widens, eventually leading him and his people, towards freedom.⁴

So this is a moment of truth – do we put God’s resources to good use or do we squander them away? This is a matter of life and death – death for those who do not take up the challenge and risk of giving all in God’s service – or life in all its fullness because through the offering of ourselves we have ensured life for the oppressed and dispossessed in a context where peace and justice for all prevail.

Prayer

Almighty and eternal God
who gave your only Son Jesus Christ
that in him we might have eternal life:
Keep us in mind of the greatness of your gift
that we may give ourselves
In thankful service for his sake;
who with you and the Holy Spirit
Is alive, and reigns
one God, now and forever.

1. Meer, *Higher than hope*, p.396.

2. Meer, *Higher than hope*, p.398

3. Meer, *Higher than hope*, p.340.

4. Claire E. Oppenheim 2012. Nelson Mandela and the Power of Ubuntu. *Religions*, 3, doi:10.3390/rel3020369 religions ISSN 2077-1444, p.369-388, 372.

24th August **Economy**

Mr Jacob Zikuli

Navigating the Economic Challenges and Opportunities We Face

“And my God will fully satisfy every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus.” (Philippians 4:19)

Our global economy is facing major tumultuous challenges due to the impact of the recent COVID-19 pandemic, geopolitical tensions, climate change, and technological shifts. These challenges have further exacerbated socio-economic inequalities and injustices, with vulnerable populations being hit hard.

In the context of our current economy challenges, inequality and injustice are real and clear manifestations of the rich's desires and greed to increase their wealth and control over the poor. Gradually the poor become powerless and subjected to be slaves of the rich. This practice is obvious in our societies and the rich continued to rule over the poor (Proverbs 22:7).

Proverbs further warns of the consequences for those who collaborate and oppress the poor to increase their wealth (Proverbs 22:16).

In the midst of these challenges, our future and hope are uncertain. However, these challenges can present many opportunities for us to reflect upon, and embrace our social, moral, and spiritual responsibility.

We can also develop greater resilience and adaptability in response to economic hardships, build stronger community bonds to come together, and support each other.

Brothers- and sisters-in-Christ these situations remind us of our call to work together to show generosity and charity to those impacted by economic inequality and injustices.

By doing this we should know that we are doing it for the Lord. Proverbs assures us of God's blessings in this action, that whoever is kind to the poor lends to the Lord (Proverbs 19:17). There is a divine assurance in faith that God will meet our needs according to the riches of his glory in Christ Jesus (Philippians 4:19).

As we reflect on the socio-economic inequalities and injustices of the global economy, may I share five encouraging steps that can provide guidance and wisdom to help us navigate the economic challenges and opportunities we face?

These steps can provide a strong foundation for addressing various aspects of our economic and social lives through faith, raising, and transforming us to a new hope.

1. Providing support through charity and counselling activities. Galatians 6:2 reminds us to carry each other's burdens, and in this way fulfil the law of Christ. Churches can offer physical assistance and provide emotional and spiritual support to those facing economic hardships.
2. Promoting community and solidarity. Paul's message to the Hebrews reminds us to endure in our faith, not to abandon our belief in Christ, stay connected to one another with love and good deeds, not give up on meeting together, and encourage one another as the day approaching (10: 24-25).
3. Advocating for justice and fairness through social justice initiatives. Isaiah 1:17 reminds us to learn and do right; seek justice and defend the oppressed. We can be an agent of change by advocating for policies that promote economic justice and reduce inequality, raising awareness about economic issues and encouraging ethical behaviour.
4. Spiritual guidance and hope. Encouraging faith and resilience by emphasizing hope and perseverance to the vulnerable through our work. In this context, God has assured us prosperity, hope, and a future for he knows the plans he had for us in doing his work (Jeremiah 29:11).
5. Building partnership and collaboration with other organizations and government agencies to address economic challenges more effectively. Ecclesiastes 4:9-10 reaffirms that two are better than one.

Brothers and sisters, these roles can help us mitigate the negative impacts of the current economic situation and foster a more supportive and resilient community.

Prayer

Heavenly Father, we come before You with heavy hearts, lifting up those who are suffering from economic inequality and injustice. Grant them strength and hope in their struggles. May Your love and justice prevail, bringing comfort and relief to those in need. Guide us to act with compassion and fairness, working towards a world where everyone can thrive. Amen.

31st August **Life-Flourishing Church**

Rev. Anthony Chung

Life-Flourishing Church

“As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, continue to live your lives in him, rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving. See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the universe, and not according to Christ.” (Colossians 2:6-8)

Many in the Western world acknowledge that we are living in a post-modern, post-Christian era. Whereas in the past the church and matters of faith enjoyed a prominent place in society, nowadays, in ever-increasing measure, the church is being pushed further away from the centre and more to the margins.

In response to this reality many church leaders clamour for the “good old days” and are seeking ways to regain what they consider their “rightful” place. Unfortunately, in this effort many are turning to worldly and ungodly approaches driven by the quest for power and privilege.

In so doing, they run the risk of losing their soul, i.e. their essence and identity, while gaining the approval of the world. Many churches have become centres of entertainment and means for personal financial enrichment.

As a consequence, instead of being the life-flourishing community that Jesus envisioned the church to be, the church may become part of a system that robs people of their identity and purpose, and thereby become a life-denying entity.

The alternative to this is a church that is a life-flourishing community that makes a positive difference in the world today.

A life-flourishing church is essentially a Christ-centred church.

In the text the Apostle Paul enjoins the believers in Colosse to continue to “walk in [Christ]...be rooted...built up...and established in the faith.”



The implication here is that having received Christ Jesus as Lord, and having got their identity and mission through their encounter with Him, they were to remain in that pathway. Paul's injunction was given in a context of paganism evidenced by polytheism and pluralism, a world with many gods and many ideas about God.

Specifically, the Gnostic worldview was threatening the church. Gnosticism was an ungodly belief system that was in direct conflict with the gospel of Christ. Paul was wary that this view would undermine the life and witness of the church in Colosse. The church today, albeit in a different time, faces a similar challenge, namely, being undermined by ungodly philosophies.

As a partnership of churches in mission committed to spreading the knowledge of Christ, the CWM family, through its member churches, is called to reflect our identity as a life-flourishing church family. This means rejecting any "hollow and deceptive philosophy which depends on human tradition."

Such philosophies include consumerism, individualism, hedonism, and secular humanism.

All of these place human feelings and wishes, and not Christ, at the centre of everything. Instead, we must embrace the life-giving and life-transforming way of Jesus Christ. It is only by being faithful to the way of Christ that we can be the kind of church that the world needs.

Rooted and established in Christ, we must reach out to the world with the good news of God's transforming love and power, revealed in that same Jesus Christ. As we proclaim this message in word and deed, from our lips as well as our lives, we will truly be a life-flourishing church.

Prayer

Lord Jesus Christ, we acclaim you as Head of the Church. You have called us to be agents of light and life. By your Spirit may we reflect your image, and by our witness may others come to experience the full life that you offer.

We ask in your name, Amen.

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7th September **Economy of Life**

Rev. Sanya Beharry

The Economy of Life

“And all ate and were filled, and they took up twelve baskets full of broken pieces and of the fish.” (Mark 6:42-43)

The feeding of the five thousand makes a wonderful Sunday School lesson for children to learn (1) to share, (2) to care, and (3) that our God is indeed a miracle-working God! It also, to me, makes for a wonderful perspective when it comes to our concept of how our economies should operate in order to reflect the Kingdom of God.

Economies are basically run on the principle of demand and supply. However, there are limited or scarce resources and, for many, an unfettered consumption that can often look like entitlement. So what makes this scenario different?

Mark’s account of this miracle begins with devastating news of the death of John the Baptist and Jesus’s desire to retreat from the world with his disciples. They had been so busy that they did not even have time to engage in one of the necessities of life: eating. But the crowds follow, and Jesus is met again with the ravenous hunger of the people for the Word of God. Despite his own fatigue and grief, care and compassion define his response instead.

Five thousand men, plus an unaccounted number of women and children, are in a deserted location and now require food. The demand is great! Jesus shifts the responsibility from each individual, to the disciples instead. The supply comes in meagre form through five loaves and two fish.

Our miracle-working Christ, looks to the heavens for guidance and with thanksgiving. The meagre becomes mega-sized and multiplies to feed each person in that place, and have multitudinous leftovers of crumbs.

In Jesus’s world, there is no need that is too large, considered irrelevant, or outside of his purview. In Jesus’ world, the fulfilling of basic human necessities does not need to rely on an individual’s wealth, capability, productivity, or acceptability. In Jesus’ world, scarcity of supply does not result in inflated prices (whether real or artificial) that would then benefit

only a select few, rather than be accessible for all. In Jesus's world, the motivation is compassion rather than greed.

What would our world look like if we followed these teachings?

Jesus told his disciples that “the poor will always be among us” — as an acknowledgement of a systemic problem, but also the systemic solution of caring for the poor through the requirements of their faith. The needs of the world are undeniably great and growing. These cannot and should not be ignored.

Our world has moved away from caring for each other to a self-centeredness that is increasingly damaging to the very fabric of our society. This model moves us back to a place of being conscientious and intentional about other humans, showing genuine care for their wellbeing through the meeting of their needs.

This model also requires of us to value the power of a crumb — the little drop in the ocean that all of us may think is inadequate. The tiny morsel of bread we consume during the sacrament of communion points to the broken body of the Son of God. Believers in Christ should know well that there is power in the meagre. Our faith is a requirement for miracles, and to break away from this system to instead foster an economy of life will require all of our faith to take action.

Prayer

God of providence, we are grateful for Your unfailing love. It is a boundless love that reminds us of how differently you see this world. You are not limited in your grace and kindness, but our hearts are often given to selfishness and prosperity over love. Remind us to look to the heavens for our guidance in every single aspect of our lives — including our economy. We desire a life of abundance for all of creation and commit ourselves now to being faithful in this economy of life and love.

Through Jesus' precious name we pray, Amen.

14th September **Education for Liberation**

Mrs Janet McConnell

Education For Liberation

*“For the Lord gives wisdom; from his mouth come knowledge and understanding.”
(Proverbs 2:6)*

Wisdom and understanding are divine gifts, suggesting that learning and instruction are tools provided by God to lead humanity toward freedom and enlightenment.

Liberation refers to freedom from oppression; freedom to access all of one’s human liberties without hindrance; freedom to become what God intends.

While there are those who are born with access to all their human liberties and have no reason to struggle for the freedom or opportunity simply to be human, and be accorded those rights, there are others who can only imagine.

Every day, somewhere across the world, there are children and youth living in depressed economies or oppressive circumstances who can only dream of what they could become. There are also those who are forced by the sociocultural and political constructs to accept their state of not-becoming. Then, there is the story of that boy or girl with the wrong name, the unaccepted skin colour, the wrong ethnicity, from the wrong side of the road, who crosses the bridge from hopelessness to human liberation wearing shoes called education.

That’s the story of hope realized. Such an outcome reflects a lived experience of the declaration found in Proverbs 2:6: “For the Lord gives wisdom; from his mouth come knowledge and understanding.” These are gifts that break down barriers, build bridges, and ultimately, liberate.

As the Christian community stands in solidarity with humanity, it is called to facilitate this hope for children and young people. Indeed, for all peoples. The church is called to participate in fostering just societies. Societies that enhance, rather than suppress the capabilities of individuals and groups to live out their God-given rights as human beings responsibly.



When children and young persons in our communities are educated, it creates ripple effects of liberation that benefit not just the individual, but families, communities, and nations as a whole. It lays the foundation for economic growth, social equity, and healthier, more just societies.

Regrettably, the ordering of life in society today seems determined to thwart the realization of this experience for too many of God's children. The prophet Hosea, laments the fact that God's people "are destroyed for lack of knowledge" (4:6). Earlier in that same chapter, he pointed out that "There is no faithfulness or loyalty and no knowledge of God in the land."

Knowledge, which may be equated with education, speaks not only of the creation of awareness, but also of the forging of relationships. Knowledge of God rooted in a liberating relationship with God reawakens us to the truth that each person is made in God's image, commissioned to be doers of justice, and practitioners of lovingkindness who walk humbly with God, among our peers.

Through our actions and interactions, do those with whom we come in contact daily see any evidence of God in us? Do we promote or hinder liberation? May we daily reflect the knowledge of God that truly liberates.

Prayer

God of truth and wisdom, grant me the spirit of boldness to be an agent of your gifts of enlightenment and liberation. By your grace, may I never hinder your work of redemption. Amen.

21st September **Gender Justice**

Mrs Doreen Wrights

Gender Justice

"Now before faith came, we were imprisoned and guarded under the law until faith would be revealed. Therefore the law was our disciplinarian until Christ came, so that we might be justified by faith. But now that faith has come, we are no longer subject to a disciplinarian, for in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith. As many of you as were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus." (Galatians 3:23-28)

"So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. God blessed them, and God said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth.'" (Genesis 1:27-28)

Women in first century Roman and Judaism were viewed as second-class citizens. This was not so for our Lord Jesus Christ. He regarded women differently from His contemporaries. This was seen in the manner in which He addressed them. Jesus even reminded the Pharisees in Matthew 19:4 of God's creation.

Galatians 3:26-28 reads "So in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus."

We can also learn about God's intentions in Genesis: "So God created humankind in his own image; in the image of God he created him: male and female he created them. God blessed them: God said to them, 'Be fruitful, multiply, fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea, the birds in the air and every living creature that crawls on the earth.'" (Genesis 1:27-28)

Women are created in the image of God just as men, and have an intrinsic value that is equal to that of men. Like men, women have self-awareness, personal freedom, a measure of self-determination, and personal responsibility for their actions.

There are several other verses that explore equality in the Bible. I firmly believe that the Father heart of God sees us all as equals, and it's a shame that women have been held back in the church for centuries. We have missed out on the valuable wisdom and truth that women have to offer.

Though we all have our own unique gifting from God and recognize the distinction between male and female in various ministries to which we are called, we are all members of the body of Christ and as such: "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female, for we are all one in Christ Jesus, our Lord." (Galatians 3:28)

Women are still being oppressed in many churches and various parts of the world, but thankfully, there are also more and more egalitarian churches and organizations who believe in Biblical equality.

Gender justice is both about law and practice. There can be no gender justice without equal rights in the law; but these are worth little if laws are implemented in a discriminatory manner.

Therefore, the body of Christ must continue to strive for justice for all. Men and women must work in unison as they perform their separate roles as mandated by Almighty God.

Prayer

Heavenly Father and Lord, thank you for accepting me as part of the body of Christ. Through the blood of Jesus I have been redeemed, forgiven and made a child of God.

Thank you that we are all one in Christ Jesus. Amen.

29th September **Trusting God in Uncertain Times**

Rev. Wellington Sibanda

Trusting God in Uncertain Times

“O our God, will you not execute judgment upon them? For we are powerless against this great multitude that is coming against us. We do not know what to do, but our eyes are on you.” (2 Chronicles 20:12)

In 2 Chronicles 20, we encounter King Jehoshaphat facing an overwhelming crisis. A vast army threatens Judah, and the king finds himself in a position of utter helplessness. Recognizing his limitations, Jehoshaphat turns to God in prayer, demonstrating a profound act of trust amidst uncertainty. His heartfelt plea captures the essence of human vulnerability: “We do not know what to do, but our eyes are on you.”

As we reflect on this Scripture, we find ourselves in a similar situation today. The aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic has left many grappling with uncertainty, fear, and the challenges of new health crises like monkeypox.

Just as Jehoshaphat sought divine guidance in his moment of despair, we too are called to place our trust in God when the future appears daunting. Jehoshaphat’s response to the crisis is instructive. Rather than resorting to panic or despair, he gathers the people of Judah and leads them in prayer and fasting.

This communal act signifies the importance of coming together in faith during times of trouble. It reminds us that we are not alone in our struggles; we have a community of believers who can support and uplift one another as we seek God’s guidance.

In verse 12, Jehoshaphat acknowledges the powerlessness of his own strength against the enemy.

This admission is crucial; it reflects a deep understanding of human limitations and the need for divine intervention. When we recognize that we cannot control or foresee every circumstance, we open ourselves to the possibility of trust in God’s plan.

As we navigate through the complexities of life—whether they be health crises, personal challenges, or societal upheavals—we are invited to shift our gaze from our anxieties to God’s faithfulness. Jehoshaphat’s focus on God rather than the looming threats serves as a powerful reminder that true strength emerges from trust in the Lord.



Trusting God in Uncertain Times

In these uncertain times, let us also declare our faith, as Jehoshaphat did, and place our concerns before God. Together, we can pray for wisdom, strength, and guidance, trusting that God will lead us through the unknown.

Prayer

Gracious God, in moments of uncertainty, we place our trust in You.

Help us to keep our eyes fixed on You, knowing that You are our source of strength and guidance. Amen.

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5th October **Doing Church**

Fayaka Siphamandla

Doing Church

"I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed." (Genesis 12:2-3)

The calling of Abram in Genesis 12 presents us with a pivotal moment in biblical history, where God promises Abram land, descendants, and blessings. Abram's journey to the promised land, however, was not without challenge, as the land was already occupied by the Canaanites. Despite this, God assures Abram that his descendants would inherit the land, signaling a covenant not only for his family but for all nations. Abram, like the church today, was called to be more than a receiver of blessings; he was to be a conduit of God's grace for others.

In reflecting on this story through the lens of the modern church, particularly within contesting contexts such as South Africa, we see how narratives like these have been misused. The late Archbishop Desmond Tutu's poignant statement, "They asked us to close our eyes to pray, and when we opened them, we had the Bible and they had the land," captures the tragic reality of colonialism. The church, at times, aligned itself with oppressors rather than standing with the oppressed. The church was meant to reflect Abram's mission to bless all families of the earth, yet it often became an instrument of imperialism, perpetuating systems of inequality.

Today, the church still faces the challenge of "doing church" in a way that uplifts the marginalized. The commodification of faith, where benefits are only extended to those who can contribute financially, mirrors the historical injustices where the poor and vulnerable are excluded. As Abram's descendants were called to bless all nations, so too is the church called to be a blessing in its local contexts. The church must resist being a self-serving institution, favoring only those with means, and instead become a beacon of justice and compassion for all, especially those who are suffering.

By rethinking what it means to be a missional church, we are reminded that mission begins at home. Just as Abram was meant to extend God's blessings outward, so should the church move beyond its walls to impact the communities around it. The church is not called to take, but to give; not to oppress, but to uplift. This reflection calls us to return to our roots, to become a blessing to all people, just as Abram was called to be.

Prayer

Gracious God, help us to be a church that reflects Your heart for justice and compassion. May we, like Abram, be a blessing to all, reaching beyond ourselves to lift up those in need. Grant us the courage to be a light in our communities, embodying Your love. Amen.

12th October **Children and Creation**

Medeline Kaluba

Children and Creation

“Train children in the right way, and when old, they will not stray.” (Proverbs 22:6)

Children have a profound role in shaping the future, including the future of our planet. As we look at the state of the environment today, it is easy to feel overwhelmed by the challenges—climate change, pollution, and deforestation. However, one of the most hopeful signs of progress can be seen in the passion and activism of younger generations. Children are not only inheritors of the earth but also its future stewards, carrying the mantle of responsibility to care for creation.

In Scripture, children are often portrayed as innocent and open-hearted, qualities that allow them to see the beauty in the world and act with pure intentions. Jesus himself places great importance on children, saying, “Let the little children come to me, and do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs” (Mark 10:14, NRSV). He places children at the center of God’s kingdom, a symbol of faith, humility, and responsibility.

This passage challenges us to reframe how we engage with environmental care. As adults, we are called not just to protect the earth for the sake of future generations but also to involve children in the ongoing mission of creation care. They have a natural connection to the world around them and, if nurtured, can lead movements of environmental justice with energy, creativity, and conviction.

It is important to foster a sense of environmental stewardship in children early on. Teaching them about the interconnectedness of life, the wonders of nature, and the biblical mandate to “till and keep” (Genesis 2:15) the earth helps cultivate a lifelong commitment to creation care. As we raise children in an era where climate anxiety is a reality, we must equip them not just with knowledge but with hope—the hope that comes from knowing they can make a difference.

Moreover, children often remind us of the simplicity of care—whether it’s planting a tree, conserving water, or picking up litter. These seemingly small acts of creation care speak volumes. They embody the Gospel in action, where love for God’s creation is expressed through tangible deeds. It is this type of stewardship that is sustainable, driven by the belief that all life is sacred and deserving of respect and protection.

As we look to the future, let us commit to empowering children to be leaders in environmental justice. Let us also remember that they teach us, as much as we teach them, about the importance of preserving God's creation. Together, we can cultivate a future where creation flourishes, and where children continue to remind us of the wonder, responsibility, and joy of caring for our common home.

Prayer

God of creation, bless the children entrusted to our care. Help us to guide them in the ways of stewardship and love for the earth. May they grow as leaders who protect and restore the beauty of Your creation. Fill them with wisdom, compassion, and hope. Amen.

19th October **The Call for Economic Justice**

Nofy Andriatsilavina

The Call for Economic Justice: Lessons from Madagascar

*“But let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.”
(Amos 5:24)*

Madagascar, the “Red Island” of Africa, offers a profound reflection on the intertwined nature of economic justice and ecological stewardship. It is a land of stunning biodiversity, home to species and ecosystems found nowhere else in the world. Yet, paradoxically, it is also one of the world’s poorest nations, where the overwhelming beauty of nature contrasts with widespread economic inequality and environmental degradation. This disparity invites us to reflect deeply on the biblical imperative of justice—an economic justice that considers both people and the planet.

Economic justice, from a Christian perspective, calls for the equitable distribution of resources and opportunities. It mandates that all people, regardless of their background, should have access to the basic necessities of life—food, water, shelter, education, and healthcare. But Madagascar reveals the harsh realities of economic exploitation, as the country’s rich natural resources, including precious minerals and fertile lands, are often exported for the benefit of foreign markets, while many Malagasy people live in poverty. This injustice is a symptom of a global economic system that prioritizes profit over people, especially the most vulnerable.

The biblical vision of justice, as expressed in Amos 5:24, is not a mere aspiration; it is a demand. The prophet Amos condemns the exploitation of the poor by the wealthy and calls for a radical reorientation of society’s values—towards a system where justice flows like a never-ending river. Madagascar’s situation challenges us to rethink how our global economic systems perpetuate inequality, where the marginalized bear the brunt of environmental destruction caused by those in power.

In Madagascar, deforestation is rampant, driven by industries that fuel the global demand for timber, charcoal, and agriculture. The consequences are dire: loss of biodiversity, increased vulnerability to natural disasters, and a direct impact on local communities whose livelihoods are tied to the land. Economic justice, therefore, must encompass not

only fair wages and job creation but also the protection of the environment and sustainable practices that honor the dignity of both creation and humanity.

As Christians, we are called to stand in solidarity with those who suffer from economic and environmental injustices. We must advocate for policies that promote economic systems rooted in fairness, equity, and sustainability. We are also invited to reflect on our consumption patterns and their impact on places like Madagascar. Are we contributing to systems that exploit both people and nature? Or are we working towards a more just world, where resources are shared, and the earth is cared for?

Economic justice in Madagascar and beyond requires us to envision a world where resources are distributed equitably, where the vulnerable are protected, and where both the land and its people can thrive. It is a vision of God's kingdom—a kingdom where justice flows endlessly, bringing life and hope to all.

Prayer

Gracious God, we pray for economic justice in Madagascar and across the world. Open our hearts to the needs of the vulnerable and empower us to work for systems that promote fairness, dignity, and sustainability. May your justice flow like a mighty river, renewing all creation. Amen.

26th October **The Spirit of the Lord is upon me**

Rev. Sikhangezile Mhlanga

Lord Fulfill Your Promise

“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free.” (Luke 4:18)

Jesus returns to his hometown

The backdrop to this story is the home visit by Jesus after the success of His early ministry in Galilee and elsewhere. As per custom, He had to visit the synagogue and participate in the worship life of the community. His fame had already reached His hometown and the expectations were high that He would perform some of the miracles that His home folk had heard about.

The scroll of Isaiah

Isaiah, whose scroll was presented to Jesus for the reading of the day, was one of the major prophets. This is where the story of the Spirit is found. Jesus chose to read the words of the promise of the Spirit from Isaiah and his declaration of their fulfillment caused what started as admiration then quickly turned sour into resentment or jealousy from the leadership who actively opposed Him. Perhaps they opposed Him out of sheer jealousy at the grace that was displayed in the life, teaching, and works of power done by Jesus.

The Spirit of the Lord

It may have been the claim that the Spirit of the Lord was upon Jesus that first aroused admiration that one of their own had broken the “glass ceiling” with the grace of the Spirit upon him. How could this have been? What about the rest of the script on the “official Messianic expectations?” How could they have been so close to the Messiah and yet have missed out? Yes, we always or still want to have a share of the nice and good things in life. In our towns and villages today, we still want the biggest share of the national budget and resources.

In fact, we want it all and leave nothing for the development of the other regions. Like the people of Nazareth, we still want Jesus to do for us the same miracles, if not more, than those He did in Galilee. We do not expect or require any faith component or responsibility at all. We just want Him to do for us what He has done for others to even out all the privileges.



The Spirit of the
Lord is upon me

The way of Jesus

The way of Jesus is different. It is the way of the Spirit of God. It is the way of uplifting the downtrodden, poor, neglected, outcasts and those living on the margins of the economy. It is a way for the unnamed and nameless and homeless ones without an identity.

The way of Jesus challenges systems that cause many to be blind and captives of addiction and abuse.

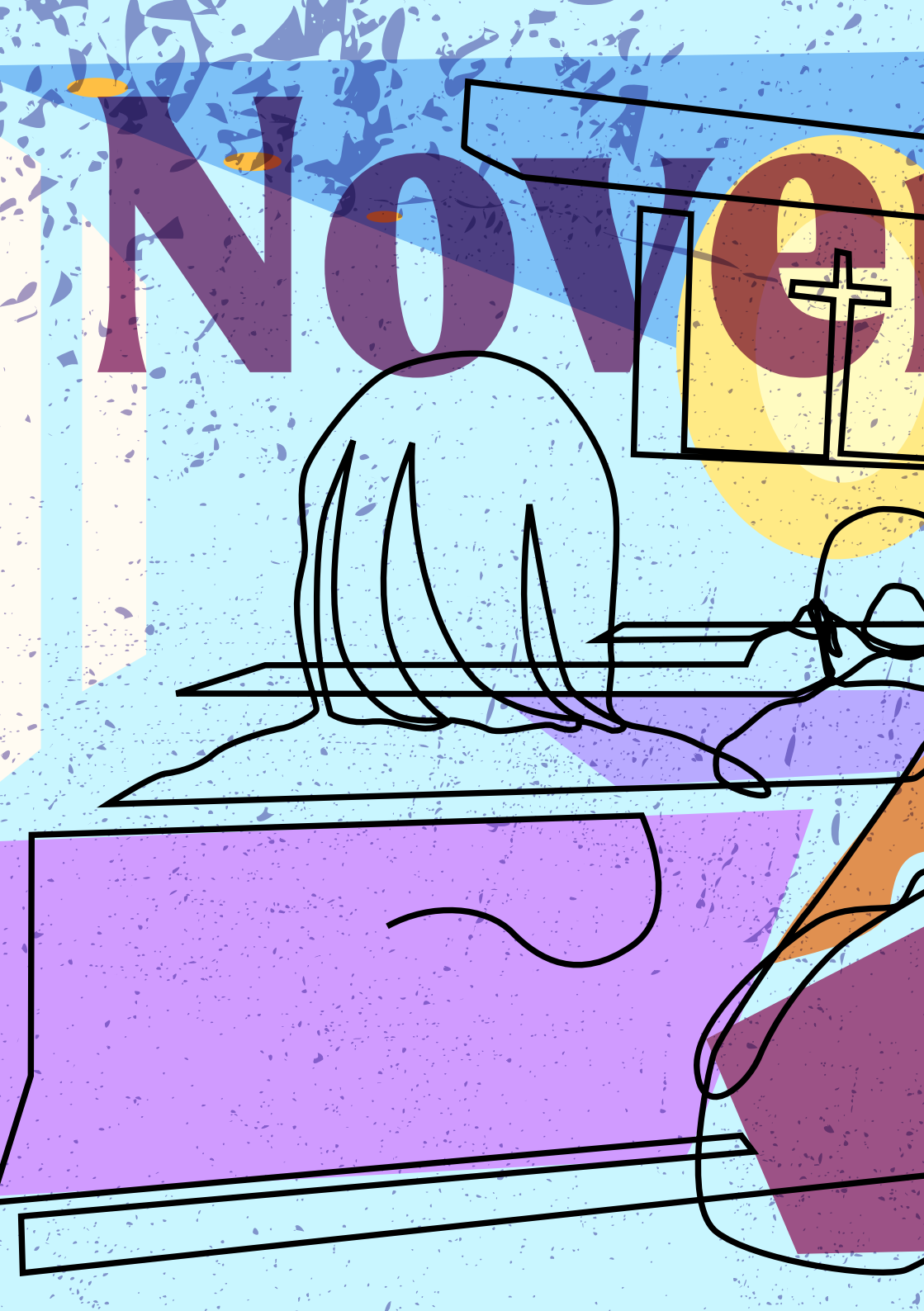
The way of Jesus opens favour as much as it breaks prison doors of hate, greed, and systemic injustice upon the girl and boy children of Africa.

Prayer

Let your favour fall on us O Spirit of the Living Lord;
Let your visitation to our neighbourhood bring us hope and freedom,

Teach us the truth and the dignity of life, O Lord,
Energize us to stand for justice.

Lord, let the year of your favour begin now and run without ending, Amen.





2nd November **Breaking the Chains**
Rev. Valentim Chiweka

God Makes Capable Those Who Are Otherwise Unqualified

"He raises up the poor from the dust; he lifts the needy from the ash heap, to make them sit with princes and inherit a seat of honour." (1 Samuel 2:8)

Your faith in God Almighty, qualifies you to new spheres of life. We serve a God who qualifies the unqualified. It doesn't matter who said what about you, and how you were born.

If it's time to raise you to the next level, He will. You matter to God, more than anything, it is why he sent Christ to die for you. He qualifies those he see fit, if it's your time no one can stand against that. Focus on him, and he will amaze you. Have faith in him no matter the vicissitudes of life you face. You are more than what you think about yourself.

Let us start each day by giving it to God with a prayer, speaking to God, acknowledging God; before we talk to anyone, God will set our day on the right path.

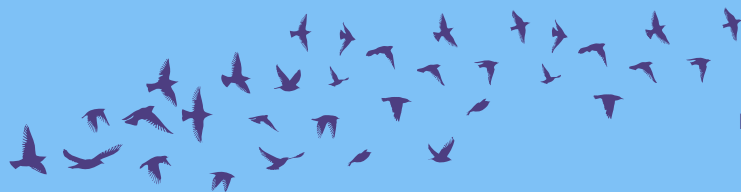
Don't take yesterday's mistakes into the clean slate of today; mentally shave off every single worry, doubt, fear, mistakes, and anxiety from your mind each morning.

Give it to God by starting each day with scripture because the Bible is food for the soul; the Bible is like cool water for our thirsty soul.

Give it to God by renewing your mind; let us continue surrendering those worries to God, trusting and believing that God is for us, God loves us, and God only wants the best for us.

God's grace is sufficient for us, the same power that raised Christ from the dead is inside of us. God has a path for us that is paved with God's grace, and God will never leave us empty. If God asked us to put something down, like God did to Abraham, it's because God will make us pick up something greater.

You are unstoppable through him.



God qualified David among his siblings.

He qualified Mary and Joseph among humanity.

God is able to make your name great. To have a great name doesn't mean you are rich. The Bible doesn't state that Mary and Joseph were filthy rich, yet they were Christ's earthly parents.

If Christ is in you, your name is great. He died for you, and you matter to Him; may your name be great. May you rise and prosper against all odds. God is able to qualify the unqualified.

Prayer

Heavenly Father, we open our hearts to you in gratitude. Thank you for your boundless grace and love. We seek your guidance and forgiveness, asking for strength and wisdom.

Help us reconcile with you, with nature, and with one another, and embrace your peace. Assure us of your presence and eternal support. Amen.

9th November **Never Tire of Doing Good**

Afika Babazile Rwayi

Never Tire of Doing Good

“So let us not grow weary in doing what is right, for we will reap at harvest time, if we do not give up.” (Galatians 6:9)

Life can be exhausting. We face challenges daily, navigate relationships, and grapple with personal and professional struggles. Sometimes, amidst the whirlwind, doing good can feel like a burden, a task on a never-ending to-do list. We might wonder, “Does it even make a difference?”

The Apostle Paul, in his letter to the Galatians, addresses this very question. He encourages them, and by extension us, to “not get weary in doing good.” This doesn’t mean ignoring our need for rest or neglecting our responsibilities. It means remaining committed to acts of kindness, compassion, and service, even when the road feels long.

Think about a farmer who sows seeds, knowing it will take time for those seeds to sprout, grow, and become a harvest. They nurture the plants, even with drought, pests, or uncertainty. Our good deeds are like seeds we sow, we may not see the immediate impact, but we trust we will reap it soon.

Perhaps the harvest won’t come in the way or on the expected timeline. It could be a changed heart, a strengthened bond, or a sense of peace within ourselves or someone else. Doing good isn’t about external validation; it’s about aligning ourselves with God’s love and creating a ripple effect of positive change.

Even seemingly small acts can have a significant impact. A kind word to a stranger, a helping hand to a neighbour, or volunteering for a cause we care about — these seemingly insignificant gestures can make a difference. We never know how our actions may inspire or empower others, ultimately contributing to a better world.

The key is to persevere, regardless of the circumstances. Challenges and setbacks are inevitable. We might face rejection, discouragement, or even feel our efforts are in vain, but Paul reminds us not to give up. Doing good can feel like swimming against the current, but we can create a positive momentum with faith and perseverance.



Never Tired of Doing Good

Let us draw strength from the knowledge that we are not alone. We are part of a larger faith community, called to love and serve one another. When we work together, the harvest becomes even more fruitful.

Prayer

Dear God, we humbly ask for the strength and courage to continue doing good in the face of challenges and difficulties. Help us to see the broader impact of our actions and to believe in the profound influence of even the smallest acts of kindness. Please remind us that by doing good, we can make a positive difference in the lives of others and contribute to a better world for everyone.

In Jesus' name, Amen.

16th November **The Children's Bread**

Mr Innocent Mankhwazi

The Children's Bread

"...but a woman whose little daughter had an unclean spirit immediately heard about him, and she came and bowed down at his feet. Now the woman was a Gentile, of Syrophenician origin. She begged him to cast the demon out of her daughter. He said to her, 'Let the children be fed first, for it is not fair to take the children's food and throw it to the dogs.' But she answered him, 'Sir, even the dogs under the table eat the children's crumbs.' Then he said to her, 'For saying that, you may go—the demon has left your daughter.' So she went home, found the child lying on the bed, and the demon gone." (Mark 7:25-30)

Imagine a world where every soul rises to its fullest potential, where communities thrive in peace and justice, and where every action we take is infused with transformative love. This is not just a distant dream but a life-giving reality that we are called to co-create with God. Jesus proclaimed, "I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly." (John 10:10).

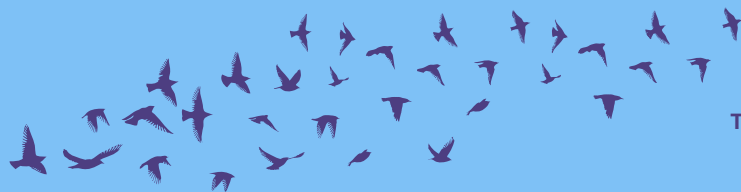
This promise of abundant life is not just for the chosen few but for all who believe. Yet, it comes with a challenge—a challenge to rise to life and participate in the transformation of our world.

The story of the Syrophenician woman in Mark 7:25-30 offers a powerful lesson about the boundaries between the powerful and the marginalized or the privileged and the oppressed.

When Jesus said, "It is not good to take the children's bread and throw it to dogs", He was drawing a line, emphasizing that deliverance—the bread of life—is a covenant right for believers. But the woman's response, her demonstration of great faith, reminds us that faith transcends boundaries and invites us into a deeper understanding of God's inclusive mission.

Jesus' ministry was centered on delivering those who were bound by the forces of darkness, but His focus was on those who had faith. In the synagogue, He cast out demons and healed the sick—those who were already part of the faith community.

He delivered a man with an unclean spirit in Mark 1:23 and healed a woman bound by a spirit of infirmity in Luke 13:11-16, calling her a "daughter of Abraham." Even in Peter's house, He rebuked a feverish spirit from his mother-in-law, again emphasizing that deliverance is for those who are in the faith.



However, Jesus' ministry of deliverance goes beyond just casting out demons. It is about transforming lives and communities, about rising to a new life that reflects God's kingdom on earth. A world where human dignity is protected, poverty eradicated, climate catastrophe abated, and peace reigns—a world where the life-giving alternative of Jesus' mission is realized in our communities.

As believers, we are called to rise with the risen Christ, whose resurrection is not just a victory over death but a proclamation that the forces of oppression—Babylon—have fallen.

We are called to respond in radical discipleship, living out the reality of the New Heaven and New Earth in the midst of a violent, abused, and grief-stricken world.

This means engaging in transformative action, resisting the philosophies of supremacy, and affirming life-flourishing alternatives.

The Syrophenician woman's story teaches us that faith and action can bring even the most unlikely person into this transformative community. Her persistence, her great faith, not only secured deliverance for her daughter but also demonstrated that God's grace is available to all who truly believe.

In this way, we see that deliverance is about restoring lives, renewing creation, and building communities where justice and peace prevail. Because deliverance without transformation leaves the person vulnerable to the same forces that bound them in the first place. Jesus Himself warned about the danger of a house left empty after a demon is cast out—it risks being overtaken by even more demons (Matthew 12:43-45). Similarly, a community delivered from the forces of darkness but not transformed by justice and love remains at risk of returning to its former state.

As we rise to life together in transformation, let us remember that the children's bread is not just about individual salvation. It is about the collective transformation of our communities and our world. It is about creating life-flourishing communities where human dignity is upheld, where the poor are lifted, where the earth is healed, and where peace reigns.

Let us build a world that reflects the life-giving alternative of Jesus' mission. For it is in this rising, in this collective transformation, that we truly experience the fullness of life that Christ came to give us.

Prayer

Gracious God, we come before You, acknowledging that the children's bread is Your gift of deliverance and transformation. Feed us with this bread, Lord, so we may rise to life in Your truth, break every chain, and build communities of justice, peace, and love.

In Jesus' name, Amen.

23rd November **Unity**

Rev. Zwai Mythobile

Unity

"I ask not only on behalf of these, but also on behalf of those who will believe in me through their word, that they may all be one... I made your name known to them, and I will make it known, so that the love with which you have loved me may be in them, and I in them." (John 17:20-26)

One wonders why are there so many wars and divisions based on ethnicity, culture, language, etc. in this world in which we live? Wouldn't it be easy and more meaningful for all of us to live in peace and harmony? Worse, Wouldn't it be better for the church of God to be united against all injustices and in turn promote peace, love and togetherness? Have we forgotten that we are all human beings created in the image of God?

The reality is that we live in broken communities and families; brokenness is even experienced in congregations and denominations based on denominationalism. Where did it all go wrong?

What does the Lord require of us, both Christians and society?

I want to challenge us to look briefly at the prayer of Jesus for unity as read in John 17.

Unity and Fellowship

It is the prayer of our Lord that we be brought into complete unity. Imagine the world where we live in unity and in peace. Wars that we see and that some experience will be things of the past. For this unity to happen we possibly need to learn also from Paul as he writes to Ephesians that, this is possible when we become patient with one another, when we love each other unconditionally, when our lives are pleasing to God, when we are humble in our lifestyles, when at all times we seek peace rather than divisions through bearing with one another. This is what Paul suggests in Ephesians 4:1: to live a life worthy of the calling you have received.

Disunity is what the devil advocates. If this is the work of the devil, those who sow seeds of divisions are therefore agents of Satan. It is our responsibility as Christians that at all times there has to be dislike for schism, there ought to be dislike for disunity; at all times we should pursue friendly fellowship amongst the people of God.

Our doctrines as churches should not be an instrument for divisions and disunity. We should not allow any of the anathema labeled against each other to be instrumental in the breaking of the body. The church should rather listen to this prayer, that the head of the

church is so concerned with the divisions it sees, and prays to the Father that we be one and completely in unity.

Unity is the Purpose of God

"I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one: I in them and you in me. May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me."

What Christians need is to be united in brotherly love, and then they may expect to have power. It is impossible for the church of God to have power to change the world when it is so divided. It is so impossible for the church to preach about peace when we don't have peace. It is impossible for the church to talk about love when it is not loving. It is time that we exile ourselves as Christians, to identify those things and areas in us that promote disunity, cut them off. We need to be like a folded hand as Christians. Each finger is not so powerful on its own, but when folded together to form a fist it becomes so effective. Unity is key and is God's purpose.

Unity should be Motivated by the Love of God

"...have loved them even as you have loved me."

What kind of love do we show to the world and to each other? We all know that loving one another is not hard work. Loving each other is easier than learning how to hate. Nelson Mandela said none of us was born with hate. Hate is the skill we learn as we grow up. I therefore, challenge all of us to learn from our Lord Jesus that through His grace he loves us.

Let us all promote the love that will yield to fellowship, and total harmony and peace. Let us be what Jesus wants us to be, fulfilling the purpose of God, that is, UNITY.

Prayer

Our Lord, our God,
may we learn from Jesus,
may we learn from his grace
to love in a way
that brings total harmony,
peace and unity. Amen.

30th November **Advent**
Rev. Dr Kondolo

Born to Redeem

*"Then his father Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke this prophecy:
'Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for he has looked favourably on his people and
redeemed them.'" (Luke 1:67-68)*

When we read scripture from Old to New Testament, it's about God's love to humanity. In our text, we are focusing on an enlarged concept of redemption, taking seriously the holistic redemption of humanity by God. Humanity was redeemed in total.

In this context, to be redeemed means to literally be set free from the pressure of the problem thereby finding solace in Christ the redeemer of the world. No one is immune from the possibility of experiencing a broken heart, a troubled mind, an affliction of every sort. No one is immune to being pressed down upon by calamities. In this case redeeming humanity may not only mean forgiveness of sin, but also redeeming humanity from all sorts of afflictions. Christ came to redeem humanity holistically. It is in this sense that the centuries have come to call Christ the world's Redeemer.

Today the redemption of the world from evil is the biggest challenge of the day. In the Zambian context, at least most theological colleges and seminaries are placing much emphasis on eco-theology and issues of justice.

How deeply are we concerned to have Christ redeem us from the bondage of our afflictions?

We may crave a rule of righteousness and may desire to change the conditions of our living, but we may still not really desire to change our own lives. Christ does not leave us sitting in remorse looking miserably and despairingly at our sins. Christ turns us from remorse to repentance. He calls us to look up from our evil deeds to the goodness of God and ask his forgiveness. He was born to set us free. He also commissioned us to set people free in every way possible.



This, therefore is a challenge to each one of us. How responsible am I as an individual, to my family, my community, my nation? How have I responded to social issues affecting humanity? How have I responded to spiritual issues affecting humanity?

We are all our brother's and sister's keepers, in our workplaces, homes, and communities. What is it that you are doing to create a redeemed community? This is with the intent of liberation leading to the creating of a new man and woman and a qualitatively different society. This is part and parcel of the saving work of Christ and it's about the human response to God's victory. If so, how have I responded?

Prayer

Heavenly Father, Creator and Preserver of all, we come before You in gratitude. We praise You without ceasing for making us your children, joint heirs with Christ. In this Advent season, we pray that You would prepare us anew and afresh for Christ's arrival and that when He comes, we will all find favour in Him. Amen.

Decem



ember



7th December **The Church's Call to Justice and Unity**

Jackie Makena

The Church's Call to Justice and Unity in the 21st Century

"He has told you, O mortal, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?" (Micah 6:8)

In today's world, the church finds itself facing some of the most pressing challenges of our time—challenges that demand a bold and compassionate response rooted in justice, love, and humility. These challenges are not new; the words of Micah remind us that God's requirements for His people have always included justice, mercy, and humility. Yet, in the 21st century, our commitment to these principles is being tested like never before.

The Apostle Paul's letters to the early churches resonate with issues we face today. As he admonished the Corinthians in 1 Corinthians 6, he urged them to address disputes and injustices within their community, warning against allowing such issues to be dictated by worldly standards. Our communities today echo these same struggles, from economic inequality to environmental degradation, gender-based violence, and systemic injustice. The world is watching, and neutrality is no longer an option. Neutrality, as Dietrich Bonhoeffer famously observed, is a stance that often aligns with oppression. In our silence and inaction, we risk becoming complicit in the injustices that Christ calls us to confront.

One critical issue that the church must address is gender-based violence. Too often, harmful teachings and silence have led to the perpetuation of abuse rather than its eradication.

Gender-based violence contradicts the essence of the gospel—a gospel that promises liberation and dignity for all. Christ's mission on earth was one of love, compassion, and justice, particularly for the oppressed and marginalized. How then can we tolerate structures or teachings that subjugate and dehumanize others? As Paul reminds us, we are not our own; we have been bought at a price (1 Corinthians 6:19-20). It is our duty to protect the dignity and well-being of every individual, recognizing them as bearers of God's image.



The Church's Call to Justice and Unity

Unity, another major theme in Paul's letters, is essential for the church's witness in the world. Divisions, whether rooted in doctrine, pride, or power struggles, weaken our collective mission. Jesus prayed for unity among His followers, understanding that a divided church could not effectively proclaim the gospel. Today, the church's disunity serves as a stumbling block, sending a conflicting message to the world. If we cannot reconcile with one another, how can we proclaim a gospel of reconciliation to others? True unity does not come from ignoring or compromising on the truth but through a commitment to humility, love, and shared purpose.

The time has come for the church to rise and speak against oppression, embodying the justice and compassion that Christ taught. Neutrality, indifference, and division are sins that obstruct our witness. It is a time for repentance, for courage, and for a steadfast commitment to be the voice for those silenced by injustice. Let us remember that God has called us to be light and salt in a world desperately in need of both.

Prayer

Lord, empower us to stand for justice and mercy with courage and humility. Heal our divisions, make us instruments of Your peace, and let us embody Your love and truth to a world in need. Amen.

14th December **Climate and Gender**

Clemencia Amanda Beta

Climate and Gender

"God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day." (Genesis 1:31)

"The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to till it and keep it." (Genesis 2:15)

When God created the universe and the earth everything was good, and God was satisfied. It is only because of sin and human interference that the climate and ecology become hostile to humanity.

Climate change is the mantra of our time. Organizations all over are up in arms trying to combat the effects of climate change. But one might ask, what happened to the land that was good before the eyes of God? We live in a world where men continue to mine and cut down trees without regard for nature.

In all these deeds, women are increasingly considered as being more vulnerable to the shocks of climate change since they account for the majority of the world's destitute and are proportionally more dependent on the environment than men. Women are particularly vulnerable to the consequences of climate change due to a combination of social, cultural, and economic variables. However, research shows that women make up a bigger proportion of church parishioners, implying that churches can do more to promote climate action and sustainability. Is the church really open to discussing how it has failed women and children, or will we continue turning a blind eye to the most vulnerable of our societies? It is disheartening to see that which God created and said was good is now but a fruitless barren land.

In African countries like Zimbabwe and South Africa, most of the neediest households are headed by women. Less than ten percent of the land is owned by women, even though they produce 50 to 80 percent of the food consumed worldwide. Many short- and long-term effects of climate change in African countries are being thoroughly felt by women. These include, drought, rising sea levels in bays, frequent and harsh cyclones, river dryness, heatwaves, low water, and many more. When these consequences are combined, they have disastrous repercussions on communities and ecosystems, especially on women. These consequences could range from social and economic



inequity to health and a food crisis. Therefore, climate action should be the central focus of our efforts as people of faith in order to attain climate justice for these women and the world at large.

The concept of climate justice encompasses the understanding that climate change is not solely an environmental issue, but also a matter of politics, society, and spirituality. Churches have the potential to significantly contribute to the promotion of gender-inclusive adaptation and mitigation approaches. This can involve organizing educational and awareness initiatives led by women, as well as incorporating these themes into Sunday school curricula to promote sustainability and environmental stewardship. Additionally, churches can leverage biblical teachings on stewardship and the care of creation to underscore the importance of preserving God's creation and safeguarding the most vulnerable.

Prayer

Lord, we thank you for the earth and the universe that you created and saw that it was good. We come to you at this moment admitting that we have failed to be good stewards of the land. We have taken more than we have given. We pray that you may give us the wisdom to take care of the land according to your will. Amen.

21st December **Media as a Communication Tool**

Alois Magigwana Nleya

Media as a Communication Tool to Spread the Gospel

“Again he began to teach beside the lake. Such a very large crowd gathered around him that he got into a boat on the lake and sat there, while the whole crowd was beside the lake on the land. He began to teach them many things in parables, and in his teaching he said to them: ‘Listen! A sower went out to sow.’” (Mark 4:1-3)

It is usually said that people will realise the importance of something when it's too late or when they need it the most. The same applies to the media and communication department in churches. This department used to be the least of the churches' priorities. It was during the COVID-19 pandemic that churches saw the need for a strong and vibrant communications department.

If used properly, the media is a very powerful and useful tool for spreading the gospel to communities.

In the gospel according to Mark 4: 1-3, we see Jesus teaching a multitude of people from a boat using the advantage of wind to reach all of them. This proves to us that Jesus used wind to his advantage. I want to dwell a little bit on verse 3 which says, “Listen! A sower went out to sow.”

As Christians it is our fundamental responsibility to go out and sow. Jesus had to use a boat, but nowadays, how many tools of communication do we have—and how many are we utilising to the fullest? Most of the time, when we talk of media, people are quick to point out the bad that is happening or that is perpetuated through the media. Only a few would point out on how it can be used as a tool to reach the broken communities.

But have we ever considered how many souls we would reach if we fully utilised the media?

There are so many people who live in places where it's difficult for pastors to reach on a daily basis but through WhatsApp channels, groups etc., they are able to send their sermons and reach those people. How do we anticipate to reach all the corners of the world without the use of the media?



Most of the times we underestimate the power of media, especially when it comes to reaching people from all corners of the world. Within our societies, we have broken people who need to hear the gospel but are not yet free to go to churches, some due to illnesses while some due to social anxiety and depression. These social platforms can be useful in delivering the gospel and words of encouragement to them. We often take it for granted that everyone is able to go to churches. But in reality, there are so many people out there we could sow the word to, who are not able to attend physical services.

Prayer

Lord, we thank you for the gift of life and the intelligence that you continue giving us. We also realise that sometimes our intelligence has become a hindrance to fully worshipping you in truth and in spirit. Lord, we seek your guidance as we try to navigate the world of modern technology as a church. Protect us from being victims of technology but give us the wisdom and the discernment to use media for the glory of your name. In Jesus' name, we pray, Amen.

25th December **Christmas**

Rev. Dr Amelia Koh-Butler

Grace Enters the World

“For the grace of God has appeared that offers salvation to all people. It teaches us to say “No” to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, while we wait for the blessed hope—the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good.” (Titus 2:11-14)

The writer of Titus offers pastoral guidance and, in this brief letter, singles out mature women. When I think of Christmas, I think of the influence of my grandmothers: one I was very close to and the other I barely knew. One lived close and spoke the same language, while the other lived in another country and spoke in a language that I did not know. We met a few times but never made a strong connection, largely because of the communication obstacles. Now that I am a grandmother, I may have a positive influence on my family circle, friends and community. Living in a different country from my grandchildren, I have to work to stay connected with them. One of my grandsons will join me this year and we will share an intergenerational adventure!

Christmas is often a time when matriarchs surface. We celebrate the story of the brave young woman, Mary, as she faithfully delivers grace into the world. Even in her youth, she mothers Jesus. He comes to us through her. She has faithfully waited in blessed hope for the manifestation from her womb. She becomes the conduit for so much more than her own life.

We celebrate the coming of the Christ, but perhaps we should also be reflecting on the potential that comes with our own pregnancy, as we carry the living word of God in our hearts and souls. In the coming season, what new acts of salvation will grow and be birthed from our attention to the Holy Spirit, working fresh life in us?

I imagine older “HIEROPREPES” women, Anna (in her eighties) and Elizabeth, encouraging new life. The Greek term refers to sacred, fit for divine service, and worthy of reverence. I imagine the contrast with those who gossip and put Mary down for her pregnancy out of wedlock and their judgmentalism. I wonder how we nurture life-flourishing and turn away from judgmentalism and destructive gossip? In the Titus



letter we are reminded of redemption, purity, and zealousness for good deeds. Among early Christian communities, older women taught and encouraged younger women and ministered to other women of any age (single, married, or widowed). They visited the sick and those in prison. They provided hospitality, especially to mission/ministry visitors. In many places they would go out searching for abandoned newborns, making them family by baptism and adoption. Praise for such good deeds is tempered by warnings about slander and malicious words.

Christmas can be a time of generous blessing, but for many, it can also be a vulnerable time when cracks appear in families under stress and strain. When people are feasting and self-control may be a little loose, it can be easy to say or do something that is hurtful. Christmas is a time when we should be most conscious of the grace we have received and which we should demonstrate in how we treat others. May our maturity become evident in how we grow in grace and generosity of spirit.

Prayer

God of grace, appearing in the face of a baby,
appear also in our conversations and actions this Christmas.
God of salvation, work in us,
that we may give birth to love and joy as we share with others on this feast day.
Grant us all saving grace. Amen

28th December **Year-End**
Rev. Dr Graham McGeoch

Decolonising the Temporal

“After this I saw another angel coming down from heaven, having great authority; and the earth was made bright with his splendour. He called out with a mighty voice, ‘Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great!’ ” (Revelation 18: 1-2a)

Time is colonialism’s secret. It helps to conform us to this world; this world being a colonial project. I am asked to write for the “year end.” The “year end” references the Gregorian calendar, a European colonial project introduced at the start of what Latin American liberationists recognise as the advent of modernity in 1582.

Time is colonialism’s secret. It helps to conform us to the world; this world being a colonial project. For the church, it is not the “year end.” You will (probably) read this in the Season of Christmas, which follows Advent. Advent marks the “new year” for the church. Colonising time marks the “year end.” The church celebrates newness in the Season of Advent and Christmas.

Time is colonialism’s secret. It helps to conform us to this world; this world being a colonial project. The landless workers, agriculture labourers and the farmers will tell us of a different time. “Year end” is marked by the harvest. The rhythm of the year circles around planting, tending, harvesting, and resting. The rhythm stands in defiance of colonising time.

Time is colonialism’s secret. Empire puts everyone on the same watch. Yet, I might write from the year 4722 (China) or 1446/1447 (Islam). Other Empires; other times; other endings and beginnings.

Sub-comandante Marcos – an insurgent leader of the Zapatistas – has written a short story about the he of the day chasing the she of the night: an Indigenous story about the sun and the moon. They only ever meet at their endings and beginnings, always, forever.

Time is colonialism’s secret. Fall, fallen, fallen is Babylon! The angel tells us so.



Prayer

God of our ancestors

we are living under the Empire of landlessness and exclusion.

We pray that under the power of the Spirit and our lives together,

we push back the evil of colonial land-grabbing, and include others in the list of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, so that all of humanity can have life, and life in abundance.

In the name of God, our liberator. Amen.

(Prayers from the Ends of the World: Prayers in Defiance of Empire, 2020, p. 202.)



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