



SUNDAYS

WITH **CWM** 2026



a partnership
of churches
in mission

Council for World Mission



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WITH **CWM**2026



Council for World Mission

www.cwmission.org

The Council for World Mission is a worldwide partnership of Christian churches. The 36 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.**”

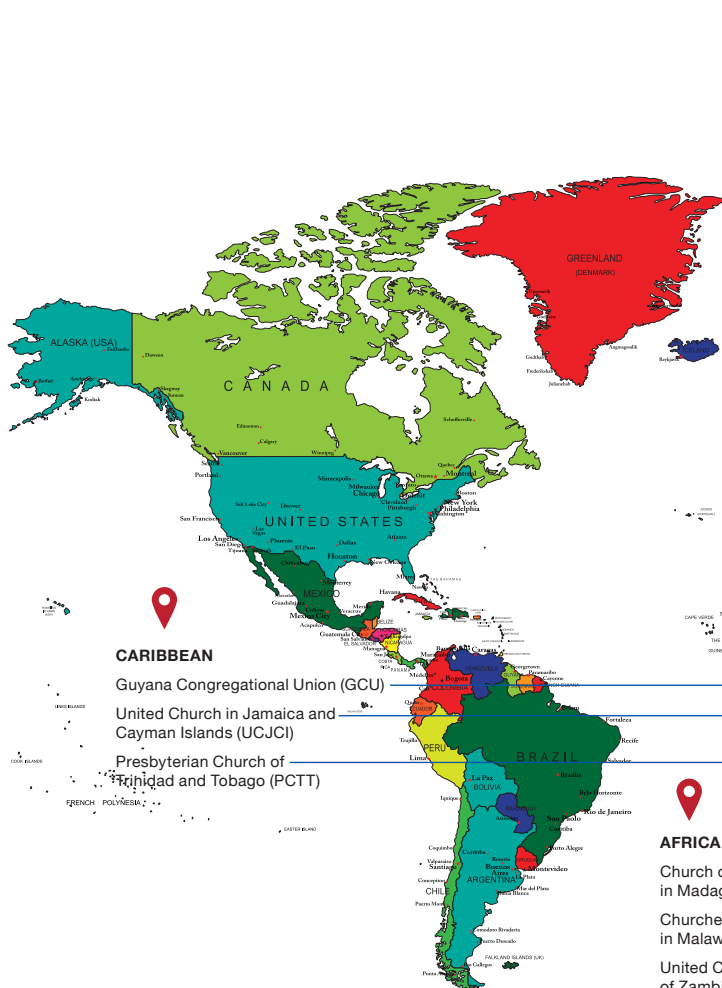
CWM’s emphasis is on naming this “violent, abused and grieving world” that ought to be replaced with life-flourishing communities, based on justice and peace. It is a clear sense of call to partnership with churches and the ecumenical community in which radical and prophetic discipleship is expressed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



CARIBBEAN

Guyana Congregational Union (GCU)

United Church in Jamaica and
Cayman Islands (UCJCI)

Presbyterian Church of
Trinidad and Tobago (PCTT)



EUROPE

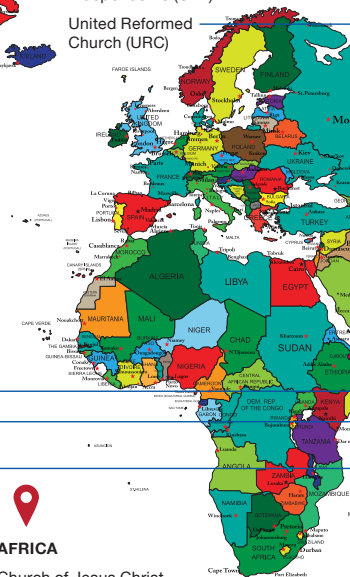
Congregational
Federation (CF)

Presbyterian Church
of Wales (PCW)

Protestant Church
in the Netherlands
(PKN)

Union of Welsh
Independents (UWI)

United Reformed
Church (URC)



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)

Presbyterian Church of Mauritius (EPIM)

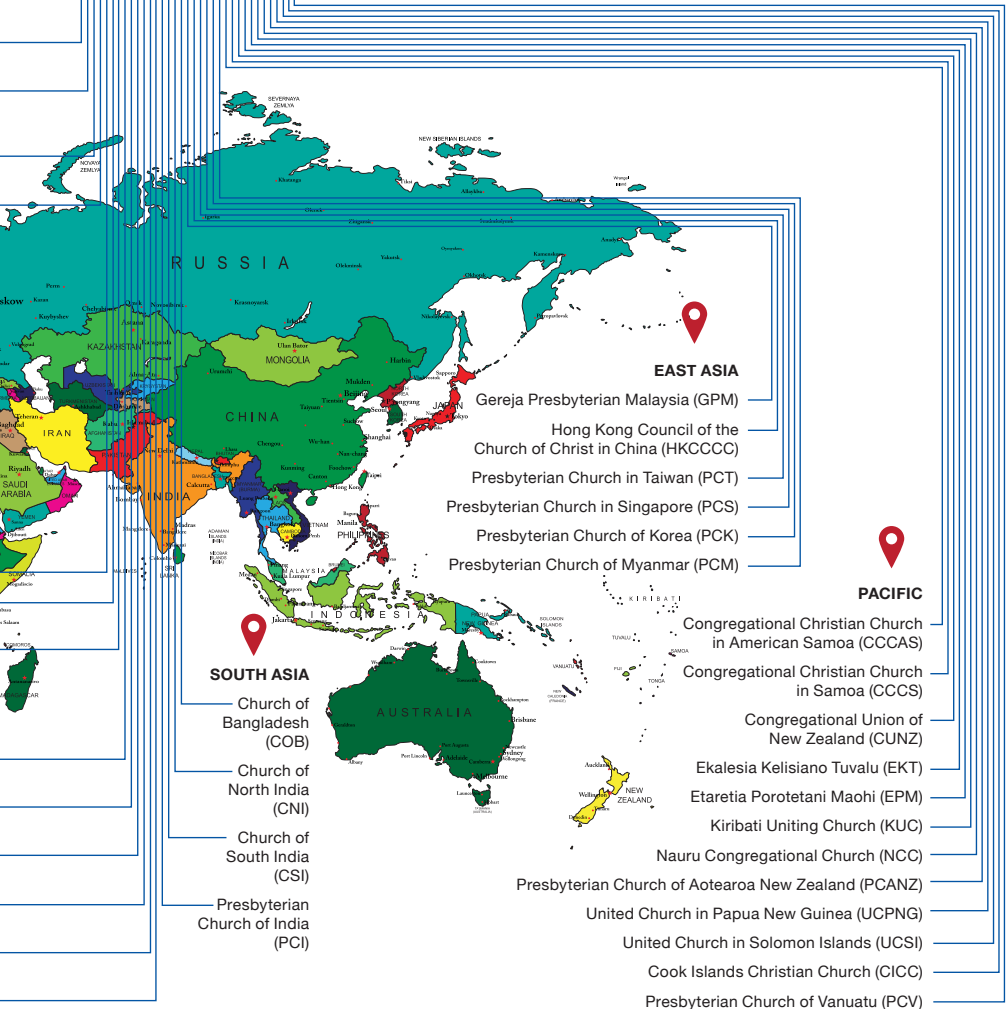
Our Members

6
Regions

36
Member Churches

200,000
Congregations

23M
Members





FOREWORD

To the CWM global family, partners, friends, and all people of good will,

With a spirit of hope for the New Year ahead, we present to you “Sundays with CWM 2026,” a devotional resource to use on your own, within families and church congregations, whenever you want to reflect not only on the world’s challenges but on how we sustain the hope and strength to face them.

“Sundays with CWM” is an annual tradition that enables us to hear voices from every CWM region—Africa, Caribbean, East Asia, Europe, Pacific, and South Asia—in all their God-given diversity.

We hope you join us in these weekly devotions; each includes a reflection based on a biblical text, as well as a prayer. As we listen deeply to one another on a weekly basis, may we deepen our commitment to building life-flourishing communities by ensuring all voices are heard. May this deep listening and sharing unite us as one family in God’s mission, a family that stands together in solidarity amid our shared vulnerability.

Whether reflecting on the climate emergency, the wisdom of Indigenous people, or what it means to feel accepted, we hope you find words that strike your heart afresh and strengthen your faith.

You will also find many stories of reconciliation and care: how Jesus transforms those who have been excluded, for many different reasons, and makes them whole again.

As Jayden Bosworth Ewen writes in the 18 October 2026 devotional prayer: “Open our eyes to the quiet prophets among us such as the elderly, the poor, the abused, the forgotten. Help us to honour their witness, to learn from their endurance, and to stand beside them in love.”

In addition to discussing economic inequality, technological advancement, and the ongoing struggle for decolonisation, Sundays with CWM 2026 contains a strong youth voice, a symbol of our investment in God’s future and a force that is

resisting cultural erosion through a rooted and liberating faith. I hope you will see how this generation is acting courageously to address systemic injustices and embody the Gospel's call to solidarity and justice.

As we journey together through each week's reading, may we be reminded that our collective mission is rooted in the call to justice, liberation, life-flourishing communities, and a more compassionate world.

These are truth-telling stories: they express pain, joy, frustration, wonder, despair, gratitude. Most of all, they portray, on a very personal level, how God's servants are working across the world—in their homes, churches, on the land and sea. We commend the courage and honesty of our prophetic contributors for persevering in their witness and for speaking hope into a wounded world.

Through Sundays with CWM, may you, as Romans 12:2 suggests, “be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God.”

Wishing you many blessings during 2026,

Rev. Dr Jooseop Keum
General Secretary



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JANU



JARY





4 January New Year

Rev. Dr Ralph A. Hoyte

New year's resolution and revolution

"But when he came to himself, He said... I will get up and go to my father, and I will say to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son...' So he set off and went to his father." (Luke 15:17-20)

Retelling the Good News (21st century edition)

When he came to his senses, he said,

"I will emancipate myself from this cell of solitary confinement; from this dungeon of self-abasement and self-depreciation.

I will arise and return to the house of potential and possibility and open the door to a future of resurrection and renewal.

I will rouse myself from the stupor of self-pity, and the stigma of failure, and make my re-entry into an environment of redemption.

I will repent from this negative emotion of unworthiness, to receive the blessing of acceptance and belonging."

— *My paraphrase, with thanks to the original parable.*

The beginning of the restoration

The revolution begins with the resolution: the dramatic moment of repentance, when we return to our right minds, emancipating ourselves from mental slavery. It is the moment of truth, when we are restored to critical and creative thought, and a mental and spiritual revolution picks up momentum, as we sing and pray our resolution:

"Dear Lord and Father of mankind, forgive our foolish ways;
Reclothe us in our rightful mind; in purer lives thy service find,
In deeper reverence, praise."

(Words: John Greenleaf Whittier)

Restored to thought, it is the moment of transformation, when we adopt the new philosophy

"I think, therefore I am" (*Descartes*), and we are ready to begin the New Year, as a new creature, poised to change thinking into action.

The momentum of the restoration

The revolution picks up intention and dynamism, as we move from contemplation and reflection to deliberate action: I will arise and activate the power to walk the long road to freedom and redemption. "I think, therefore I can!" Once upon a time, we were impotent, but now we are restored to dynamic power, with the miraculous capacity to "soar on wings like eagles; to run and not grow weary: to walk and not be faint." (*Isaiah 40:31*).

There was a time when we were imprisoned in the dungeon of paralysis and inactivity, but then, the moment of empowerment!

“God’s eye diffused a quickening ray; I awoke; the dungeon flamed with light...” (*Charles Wesley*)

The chains were dismantled, and the revolution took wings.

The climax of the restoration

And it is a climax that provokes us to praise and celebration:

“I will exalt you, O Lord, for you lifted me out of the depths...
O Lord my God, I called to you for help and you healed me.
O Lord, you brought me up from the grave; you spared me from going down into the pit.” (*Psalms 30:1-3*)

We are experiencing a metamorphosis from resolution to revolution.

From the chrysalis of thought and struggle, there emerges a beautiful butterfly symbolizing new life, energy and creativity. Now the restoration is complete, and we are ready to face the horizons of a New Year, with courage and fortitude. The resolution that allowed us the will to live has become a revolution of life; the resolution of mere thought has become the revolution of powerful action.

And so we close with the full statement from Keble’s Hymn:

“Through sleep and darkness safely brought,
Restored to life and power and thought...”

By God’s grace may we face this New Year with renewed capacity to think, act, and live.
Shalom!

Prayer

Life-giving God; Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier:

You turned our wailing into dancing;

You removed our sack cloth and reclothed us with joy...” (*Psalm 30:11*)

You transformed our regret into rejoicing; our despair into hope,

And our dying into a new desire for living.

For all of these mercies, we express our gratitude and Love!

Amen.



11 January Creation care
Rev. Dr Xolani Maseko

The earth will not be silenced: a mission of resistance

"We know that the whole creation has been groaning together as it suffers together the pains of labor..." (Romans 8:22)

This verse is descriptive of the cosmic condition and also a promise concerning the future liberty of creation alongside that of the children of God. It could also be seen as an indictment to humanity for their sin which has resulted in the bondage of nature.

This verse being read through post-colonial eyes, laments the evils inflicted upon nature by the extractive tendencies, desire for profit, and western notions of development that occurred at the expense of ensuring sustainability of nature. This evil system has mutated into neo-colonialism that has brought privatisation of natural resources. Examples include water and land which are now sold in the market. This has widened the gap between the rich few and the poor majority. Walking through some countries in Africa will reveal a sight of veld-fires, scarred land due to mining, dirty and littered water bodies, and desertification due to the Anthropocene.

Because of the evils of imperialistic political economic structures, neoliberalism, underdevelopment, and human greed, nature is groaning alongside the rest of the creation. We have witnessed natural disasters, very extreme weather, erratic rainfall, hunger, and poverty.

But who will silence the groaning of humanity and all nature? This is imperative to all beneficiaries of systems of colonialism and imperialism to repent of the evils they have inflicted on humanity and all creation. They must be involved in the ministry or acts of reparations and efforts of ensuring stewardship of creation and its replenishment.

This implies that mission must proceed from a place of consciousness and discernment of what God is doing in liberating his creation and humanity. Mission must never be seen as charity but as fulfilling a responsibility by those who have been blessed in them being a blessing to fellow humanity and nonhuman creation. In mission, the church must advocate for responsible extraction from nature, means to replenish it, and sharing the resources of the world to all God's people.

Prayer

Dear God, we come to you in the name of Jesus with penitence for our sins as humanity. We have sinned against each other and against your creation. Forgive us for perpetuating evils entrenched in us by imperialism. Help us to see the intrinsic value of your natural environment. Open the eyes of those who are in the privileged positions to note that their privilege is a means to bless your people and the environment. Help us to be conscious of the groaning and cries of nature. Teach us to live and act responsible as your children.

This we pray in the name of your son Jesus Christ. Amen.



18 January Breaking the chains of Empire: God's economy of enough
Rev. Dr Mary Mwiche Zulu

Anchoring in sure foundations

"Righteousness and justice are the foundation of your throne; Mercy and truth go before your face." (Psalm 89:14)

The world today struggles with living in righteousness and justice. Injustices such as poverty, social, political, and economic inequalities and discrimination characterise most nations. To what extent is the gospel of transformation helping communities rise to life? How are you as a disciple of Christ participating in the transformation of lives?

An anchor is used to secure firmly in place or position in one place a vessel such as a ship. An anchor, though usually small compared to the vessel it's securing, is necessary. Similarly, the foundation of any building is vital to securing structural and physical integrity.

God's reign is anchored in righteousness, justice, mercy, and truth. Righteousness and justice describe the moral obligations to God, which should be evident in fairness in how humanity and all of creation treats one another. Righteousness and justice cannot exist without the other. Rising to life and seeking transformation in every aspect of life, requires you to anchor your life in God, whose righteousness shall enable you to live in justice, showing truth and mercy in the transforming mission of all the earth. These are sure foundations for personal and corporate growth.

Micah 6:8 shows that God requires us to do good by living justly, loving kindness, and walking in humility. The world would be a better place if the children of God anchored their daily lives in living right and seeking to be just in all ways. Have you ever wondered why the legal system refers to justice as "lady?" Because justice embodies virtues of fairness and ought to be impartial at all times. Justice ought to care for everyone despite their status in society. Justice and righteousness are two sides of the same coin. To live right with God is evident in how we treat other people, and all of God's creation.

As we seek to have life-flourishing communities, a vision of a new heaven and a new earth, we all ought to rise to deconstruct all life-denying spiritualities and ideologies that dehumanise and devalue that which God has put in creation, dignity, and faithful stewardship—dignity that is reflected in healthy human relationships, in how we use authority and power, how we care for the environment. Living right with God should manifest in how we dignify and care for all of God's creation (Psalm 124:1). Righteousness and justice, lived out in God's love, are the sure and steadfast anchor of sustainable living.

Prayer

God of justice and righteousness, God of light and love, God of truth and liberation. Forgive and cleanse us from all unrighteous ways. Help us to live out your values as an anchor for peace to reign in our families, communities, and nations. In the name of Jesus we pray. Amen.



25 January Land justice
Rev. Nkululeko Nojoko

Return the land: decolonising the Earth and church

"Put no confidence in extortion, and set no vain hopes on robbery; if riches increase, do not set your heart on them." (Psalm 62:10)

Psalm 62:10 reminds us, "If riches increase, set not your heart on them." This verse invites us to reflect on the true sources of security and peace, especially in contexts where land has been stolen and people uprooted. Today, we grapple with the profound implications of land justice and the pursuit of peace in the face of systemic injustice.

Many communities have experienced the pain of land theft, where ancestral lands were taken without consent or compensation. This dispossession has led to deep-rooted injustices, affecting not only the economic stability of these communities but also their cultural identity and spiritual wellbeing. The psalmist's warning about the fleeting nature of riches is particularly poignant in these contexts, where the wealth of the few has been built on the displacement and suffering of many.

The challenge we face is how to preach peace in a world where peace is often promised without addressing the systemic injustices that prevent true peace from being realized. Peace cannot be genuine when it is built on stolen soil or when it ignores the cries of the uprooted. True peace requires justice. It demands that we confront the historical and ongoing injustices related to land ownership and use.

Reparations and land justice are not just economic or political issues; they are deeply spiritual. They speak to the heart of God's desire for justice and righteousness. When communities are allowed to reclaim their land or receive reparations, it is not just about financial compensation; it is about healing, restoration, and acknowledging past wrongs. This process can be a step towards true peace, where all people can live with dignity and security.

Our theology must be one that critically examines the blessing of stolen soil. We cannot, in good conscience, bless land that has been acquired through violence, displacement, and injustice without working towards restoration and justice. This requires a commitment to listening to and amplifying the voices of those who have been marginalized and dispossessed. It means advocating for policies and practices that promote land justice and support communities in reclaiming their heritage.

As we reflect on Psalm 62:10, let us remember that true peace is not found in the accumulation of wealth or the possession of land at the expense of others. Peace is found in justice, in the restoration of what is rightfully owed, and in the healing of historical wounds. Let us strive for a theology and a practice that seeks to bring about genuine peace through the pursuit of justice, particularly in the context of land and reparations. Only then can we truly say we preach peace, not as a distant hope, but as a present reality grounded in justice and righteousness.

Prayer

Dear God, we pray for justice and peace on earth. Guide us to listen to you so that we may help the marginalized. Help us to prioritize justice and equality, healing historical wounds, and working towards a world where peace is a present reality for all. Amen.

A wooden cross is shown against a blue sky with scattered white clouds. A vibrant purple cloth is draped over the horizontal beam of the cross, with its folds and edges catching the light. The vertical post of the cross is on the left side of the frame.

FEBRU

UARY





1 February Let the waters roar: baptism, resistance, and the commons
Rev. Dr Maurice Davantin

Do not be afraid, for God is with us

“God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, though the earth should change, though the mountains shake in the heart of the sea; though its waters roar and foam, though the mountains tremble with its tumult. Selah.” (Psalm 46:1-3)

This psalm attributed to the Sons of Korah is believed to have been written in a time of crisis. It depicts their state of mind that expresses their confidence in God who was their refuge and strength. For them, God was not a faraway God, rather, He was in their midst, by their side. So, even in times of tribulations and natural disasters, “though the earth should change, though the mountains shake in the heart of the sea, though the waters roar and the mountains are tumultuous, they will not fear” (Psalm 46:2-3). They knew that their God would defend them.

Like the Sons of Korah, we too face difficult times. We are confronted with different types of problems in our society, not only cosmic disasters, but also injustices that bring poverty and oppression of all kinds that deprive people of their independence; and that deteriorate the quality of life on earth. We should not fear, for God is in our midst.

As a result of our baptism—which is the external sign that we belong to the community of faith—and because of our love for God, even if the waters roar, we, the church, should not remain silent in the face of the injustices of this world, for silence is not an option. We are to raise our voices and be the prophetic voice to the world.

Our role is to be the salt and the light of the earth, as Jesus reminded us in Matthew 5. 13-16. We are to speak the truth to all and expose the Gospel to the world. Jesus reminded both the church and societal leaders of the teachings of Christ. Whenever the opportunity arises, we are to denounce all injustices.

Our commitment should be genuine. As it is written in 1 John 18, “let us love not in word or speech but in deed and truth.” In doing so, we’ll be in a position to bring hope to all those who live in despair or illusion.

Our role is also to denounce all forms of injustice and corruption that affect our societies. Micah 6:8 invites the reader to “Seek justice and love kindness.” It reads: “He has told you, O man, 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?” This teaching of Micah stresses that the actions of believers are to right all wrongs, to show compassion to others, and to have a dependent and humble relationship with God.

Prayer

Heavenly Father, we are sometimes so preoccupied by many things that we fail to see the injustice around us. The noise of this world has deafened us to the point that we do not hear the cries of the afflicted. Out of carelessness, ignorance, or fear, we do not dare open our mouths to denounce the evils around us.

Lord, come to our aid.

Come open our eyes, our ears, and our mouths so that we may be faithful witnesses to the Gospel.

Let us feel your presence in our midst. Amen.



8 February Climate justice as faithful rebellion
Rev. Lonjezo Sam Makuwira

Humanity in nature

“You have made the moon to mark the seasons, the sun knows its time for setting. You have made darkness and it is night, when all the animals of the forest come creeping out. The young lions roar for their prey, seeking their food from God. When the sun rises, they withdraw and lie down in their dens. People go out to their work and to their labour until the evening.” (Psalm 104:19-23)

The Psalmist gives a picture of divine order: Moon and sun keeping time, lions hunting in darkness, humans working in light. This ancient rhythm speaks of a world where each creature has its place, its time, its role in God’s intricate design. Yet today this harmony lies shattered by human hands.

Climate change is not just a merely an environmental issue; this is a profound, very critical spiritual crisis, a manifestation of humanity’s broken relations with creation and the Creator. When we treat the earth as a commodity rather than God’s gift, when we prioritize profit over the wellbeing of future generations, when we remain silent while the most vulnerable suffer the consequences of environmental degradation, we participate in what can only be called sin.

The climate crisis reveals the interconnectedness that the psalmist celebrates. Carbon emissions from wealthy nations don’t respect borders; they impact subsistence farmers in rural areas of Malawi and neighboring countries, facing submersion. The young lions of Psalm 104 may roar for prey, but what happens when their habitats disappear? What happens when the delicate balance between day and night, work and rest, is disrupted by extreme weather patterns that make labor impossible?

Climate justice demands that we see this crisis through the lens of faith, not as an inevitable catastrophe, but as a call to faithful rebellion against the system of

exploitation and indifference. Like Hebrew midwives who defied Pharaoh's death decree, we are called to be midwives of hope, nurturing life even in the face of seemingly insurmountable odds.

This rebellion begins with repentance, acknowledging our complicity in a system that harms creation, and abandoning the comfortable silence that allows destruction to continue. This rebellion continues with intergenerational solidarity, recognizing that climate action is fundamentally about love, love for our children, love for the vulnerable among us, love for the intricate web of life that reflects God's glory.

The Psalm reminds us that God made both day and night, both seasons of activity and seasons of rest. Climate justice calls us to honor these rhythms, to live within the bounds of what creation can sustain, and to ensure that all creatures, human and nonhuman, can thrive according to God's intention.

Our faith compels us to act not from despair but from hope, trusting that the God who establishes the rhythms of sun and moon also empowers us to participate in the healing of creation. This is our sacred calling: to be faithful rebels who choose life over death, justice over comfort, and hope over despair.

Prayer

Our God the Father and our Mother, forgive our silence and complicity in creation's suffering. Strengthen us to be faithful rebels, working for climate justice with courage and hope. Guide our steps towards a future where all creation can flourish according to your loving design. Amen.



18 February Ash Wednesday

Rev. Namelia Lutchman-Pulwarty

A sacred journey: a call to worship, love, and justice

"Is not this the fast that I choose: to loose the bonds of injustice, to undo the straps of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke? Is it not to share your bread with the hungry and bring the homeless poor into your house; when you see the naked, to cover them and not to hide yourself from your own kin?" (Isaiah 58: 6-7)

In the life of the church, today (Ash Wednesday) marks a very significant day as we join together as members in the body of Christ, regardless of where we are in the world, to begin that very sacred period of Lent, a time of preparation and spiritual contemplation as we journey together towards the cross at Calvary and reflect on that great sacrifice that was made for all us. It is a time when many fast and pray fervently for that period of 40 days in order to grow closer to God.

In our scripture passage of focus, it takes us to the prophet Isaiah, chapter 58, verses 1-12 in which he tells the people about what it means to truly worship God. The prophet wrote this piece of text during a time when the Israelites worshiped God in a very ritualistic and hypocritical way.

The people would fast and pray and would do all they needed to do in the temple—yet the way in which they treated their fellow sisters and brothers was far from just. In the passage, Isaiah tries to show them that there must be a connection between their worship of God and how that should translate into better treatment of their fellow neighbours. He says to them in verse 3, *"Why do we fast, but you do not see? Why humble ourselves, but you do not notice? Look, you serve your own interest on your fast day and oppress all your workers."*

The prophet called for a change in the social injustices that were being faced by many on the margins of life. He called for those who were hungry to be fed, and those who were without clothes and a warm bed to be taken into one's own home for shelter and warmth.

Living on a Small Island Developing State in the Caribbean, we are highly susceptible not only to the climate crisis but also to changes in the global economic landscape. In both of these areas we do not have direct input in deciding which direction it should go, as we are heavily reliant on developed nations to have compassion on us as they shape the world.

When global financial markets plummet or experience any type of turbulence, the effects on developing nations are tremendous; many lose their jobs and the disparity between the haves and the have nots grows even wider.

As a global faith community, we need to continue, more than ever, to band together, living out our faith in action—advocating for the fair and just treatment of all people, and calling for debt forgiveness and equal opportunities for our women and girls. Friends, as we prepare to embark on this Lenten journey, one with each other, may we hold close to our hearts the words of the prophet to live out our faith in action.

Prayer

God of love, compassion, and justice, we pray that you would help us always to see that connection between worship and caring for Your people. Teach us to love boldly, serve humbly, and stand for the oppressed. In Christ's name we pray. Amen.



22 February

Rev. Nofy Andriatsilavina

Being a young Christian leader in Generation Beta era

“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)

What Paul was saying to Timothy is more than an encouragement; it's a guideline to youth leadership. He was given spiritual authority, despite his lack of physical maturity. Paul didn't instruct him to wait until he was older or more seasoned. No, rather he told him to be an example: in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, and in purity.

This verse says that it is not how many years you've lived, but the person who determines your spiritual age. It's a call to be Christ incarnate in the world visibly and courageously when others question your preparedness.

This message couldn't be more pertinent to Generation Beta, our kids born from 2025 onwards. These children will be raised in a world led by artificial intelligence, climate urgency, virtual realities, and global interconnectedness. Their view of the world will be shaped by technologies we are only beginning to comprehend, and their spiritual inquiries influenced by a culture of quicksilver change, with a spirit of broad-hearted inclusion about what truly motivates human beings.

To guide in such an age, young Christians must be at once rooted and responsive. They must be grounded in Scripture, in prayer, and in community, in response to a generation that will hungrily seek authenticity, justice, and purpose. Leadership won't be about pulpits and podiums—it will be about podcasts, digital discipleship, relational mentoring. It will take emotional intelligence, theological depth, and cultural fluency.

Had Paul been writing to Generation Beta, he would've had a prophetic and pastoral tone. He might say: "Do not let an algorithm determine your value. No one should persuade you to believe in yourself. Be in fact a living expression—in your digital and physical speech, in the language you use online and offline, behavior online and off, love of the marginalized no matter where they come from or who they choose to love, faith that doesn't follow trends, purity of heart when surrounded by distractions."

Paul would not throw away the tools of the age—he would redeem them. He would incentivize young leaders to harness technology in service of the truth, to create communities that are full of grace, and, in this way, he reminded me that we have something powerful to say into a world desperate for hope. The message would be clear: you are not too young, too digital, or too late to lead.

To be a young Christian leader in the Generation Beta age is to inhabit the crossroads of ancient wisdom and future possibility. It is to take the Gospel where it has not yet been taken—not in fear, but with faith. And it starts with one choice: to be an example.

Prayer

Lord Jesus, raise up young leaders for Generation Beta—bold in faith, pure in heart, wise in speech, and loving in action. May they lead with courage, rooted in Your Word, responsive to their times. Let no one despise their youth, but see Christ alive in their example. Amen.



MARCH





1 March Science and the Bible

Dr Jasmine Yung

The wonder that refreshes and enlarges our hearts

“Therefore I have uttered what I did not understand, things too wonderful for me, which I did not know.” (Job 42:3)

We live in a world that craves answers. The scientific method has taught us that for every problem, there is a solution; for every mystery, a key. We demand explanations and believe that understanding leads to control and a sense of security. But the Book of Job offers a different path, one where science and faith are not adversaries but companions in a shared posture: the posture of wonder.

Job’s journey does not end with neat answers, but with astonishment. His confession — “wonders too great for me” — is the cry of one who has glimpsed the immeasurable. Job stands before a God who summons the dawn, feeds the ravens, and charts the courses of constellations. He realizes that life’s mystery is not to be conquered but received.

This stunned reverence resonates with what is called “contemplative wonder.” Such wonder is not mere curiosity but a deep, existential awakening that exposes the limitations of our understanding. It unsettles and enlarges us. It is the kind of wonder that asks why there is something rather than nothing, why beauty persists in a world scarred by suffering, why love still dares to bloom. It does not dissolve mystery, but deepens it.

Job’s confession models this posture. Wonder often strips away the ordinary meanings to which we cling. It reveals the inadequacy of our explanations and places us in the wide-open space of mystery. There, we sense that meaning is not a puzzle to be solved but a horizon drawing us forward. As Hannah Arendt

suggests, knowledge answers the “how,” but wonder pushes us toward the “why.” It is a summons to the quest for meaning.

Science, too, can evoke such wonder. A telescope peering into galaxies, a microscope gazing into cells, each can awaken both awe and humility. Wonder’s unsettling nature and its proximity to awe is found in both science and the Bible, signalling that we have reached the limits of our present understanding. It prepares the ground for a fuller understanding of the world, making us receptive to any value to be found in it, and fosters a willingness to revise our beliefs.

For Job, wonder is both a humbling and a homecoming. His questions are not silenced but transfigured. In beholding God’s majesty, he discovers meaning not in tidy explanations but in the God whose wisdom and mercy enfold all creation. Mystery does not deny meaning; it bears it. And wonder does not end in darkness, but in the light of inexhaustible mystery.

Perhaps this is where our quest leads us, not to answers that close the book, but to a love that opens it wider. Wonder reminds us that truth is alive, that God’s beauty is boundless, and that even when we cannot explain, we can adore.

Prayer

God of mystery and light, draw us into the wonder that humbles and enlarges our hearts. Teach us to welcome questions that unsettle, to rest in Your presence when answers fail, and to let awe blossom into love. May our knowledge grow into reverence, and our wonder into worship. Amen.



8 March Love for the neighbour
Rev. Dr Leonard Wee

Compelled by the love of Christ

“He answered, ‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbour as yourself.’” (Luke 10:27)

“Wash yourselves; make yourselves clean; remove the evil of your doings from before my eyes; cease to do evil, learn to do good; seek justice, rescue the oppressed, defend the orphan, plead for the widow.” (Isaiah 1:16-17)

“I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another.” (John 13:34)

These scriptural passages drive home the point that I wish to make in this reflection: True religion is not just about our worship of God, singing our praises to him, and making our intercessory prayers; it is also about caring for the weak and defenceless in our society.

Isaiah 1:16-17 tells us that our spiritual purity (“*make yourselves clean*”) consists of putting away our evil deeds and doing good to the people around us, showing them love and mercy.

There was, therefore, a great constrain in my heart when I heard about the plight of a six-year-old child in my foster care, who was physically and emotionally abused by his own parents. The atrocities were unimaginable, that a parent would do such things to his or her own kid! So, torn and battered, the kid was sent to us. It was a long journey of recovery from trauma, to show a child that the world can be a much kinder place than what he was experiencing during the first six years of his life.

Nonetheless, the road to recovery has not been easy. It took a lot before the child could accept the love and kindness of his foster parents. It was not easy for the kid; it was not easy for the foster parents, either. And yet, through this experience, I learnt a profound theological lesson about the love of God.

It boils down to the commandment that is given by Christ, that we are to love our neighbour as ourselves (Luke 10:27). And then, he also says that we are to love one another as he has loved us (John 13:34)!

In both contexts, there is only one kind of love to which Christ is referring: the unconditional love that we are to have for one another, and for our neighbour. That same unconditional love that God demonstrates to us when he sent his Son Jesus Christ to die on the cross in order to redeem us from our sin! That is the kind of unconditional love that we are commanded to have for others, especially those who are weak and defenceless in our society.

Thus, despite the toil and the hard work of taking care of a kid who was badly bruised and traumatised, we are compelled by the love of Christ to love him without placing any limit on that love!

Just as our human depravity coupled with the infinite love of God led to the inevitable death of Christ on the cross, we are compelled by that same love to take care of the kid who needs healing, nurture, and protection. Nay, even if it means sacrificing my own life in the process of redeeming his life from the evil that he had been experiencing, I would do it. That is what Christ has called us to do—in situations like that.

It is what true religion, and what true discipleship, is all about!

Prayer

Our dear heavenly Father, thank you for your infinite and unconditional love for each one of us. You have commanded us to reflect that love to those who are around us in the world, including the weak, the defenceless, and the fatherless. May you empower us, and use us as channels of your blessing to love our neighbour unconditionally, to bring healing to our communities, and to mediate your salvation in the world. In the name of our Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, we pray. Amen.



15 March Indigenous women in leadership
Dr Ayah Demaladas (Chung-Chih Hong)

Where faith meets difference: reimagining grace and belonging through the eyes of a Taiwanese Indigenous woman

“Moses writes concerning the righteousness that comes from the law, that ‘the person who does these things will live by them.’... For ‘everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.’” (Romans 10:5–13)

Sawmah, a respected Indigenous woman from Tafalong, an Indigenous community in Taiwan, sang an old *naming song*, reciting the ancient names of her homeland. “So many things have changed since the church arrived,” she told me. Like many of her tribe, she said, “After my mother died, my whole family converted to Christianity...In the early days of faith, some churches asked villagers to burn their traditional clothing. They said that the bright red thread was the colour of Satan.”

Paul writes that “there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; the same Lord is Lord of all and blesses everyone who calls on him.” Sawmah’s story brings this passage in Romans 10 to life, reminding us how faith and difference meet in the everyday experiences of Indigenous women in Taiwan. For many of us, these words have carried both comfort and pain. They were proclaimed as a promise of equality, yet often used to erase our identities.

Western missionaries once taught us that salvation required leaving behind our songs, ancestral rituals, and languages. We were told that, to receive eternal life, we must pray as they pray, believe as they believe, and live as they live. “There is no difference,” they said — but what they meant was, “Your own ways could never lead you to salvation.”

Seen through the eyes of Indigenous women whose bodies and lands have long been colonized, Paul’s words reveal a deeper truth: God’s love transcends every barrier created by empire, patriarchy, and fear.

From the beginning of creation, God made humankind in the divine image and breathed life into every living being. To God, there has never been true distinction — for all carry the same breath, the same image of their Creator. “No difference” does not mean the loss of identity, but the assurance that all are embraced within God’s grace.

This truth is not only spoken in doctrine but lived through the Indigenous peoples’ body and the land — through the rhythm of pounding millet, the weaving of cloth, and the stories told by grandmothers around the fire. Our languages, songs, and stories are not obstacles to faith; they are sacred spaces where the divine presence continues to dwell. “The word is near you.”

As Paul writes, “on your lips and in your heart,” the word lives in our mother tongues and in the strength of women who kept faith alive even when the world insisted their ways were wrong.

To confess that Jesus is Lord is to declare that no empire, government, or church hierarchy owns God’s grace. The gospel is not about uniformity but about recognition — about seeing the divine image shine uniquely in every people, every culture, and every woman who dares to speak her truth.

As we read Romans 10 today, we do not hear a command to surrender our identity, but an invitation to stand in our dignity and trust that God meets us in our languages, our dances, our pain, and our hope — where grace restores our belonging in the body of all creation.

Prayer

God of many peoples and many daughters, you see those made small by power and you call us by our true names.

Let our voices rise in the languages of our mothers.

Let our difference reveal your beauty, and our lives sing again of your grace.

Amen.



22 March Gender and militarisation

Rev. Dr Minwoo Oh

Bleeding and believing: her touch, her healing, her voice

“Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace, and be healed of your disease.” (Mark 5:34)

The woman who had been bleeding for 12 years was not only suffering physically but was also rendered invisible by cultural, religious, and social systems. Her body symbolised exclusion; her condition was used to justify distance, silence, and shame. Yet in the face of isolation, she refused to be erased. She acted. She reached out, voluntarily, without permission, and against the tide of social norms. Her touch was an act of resistance.

In today’s world, we see similar bleeding through militarisation, climate devastation, and systemic gender-based violence. Women’s bodies continue to bear the scars of conflict, exploitation, and exclusion. The Earth, too bleeds, wounded by extractive economies and armed conflict. But like the woman in Mark 5:25–34, women and creation do not remain passive. They reach out, daring to touch the divine, seeking not just healing but recognition.

Her action interrupted Jesus. It stopped him in his tracks. Her body, long marginalised, became a site of divine encounter and public declaration: “Daughter, your faith has made you well.” Jesus does not only heal her; he restores her voice, her dignity, and her place in the community. Her resistance leads to transformation—not just for herself, but for the system that had silenced her.

This story is not merely about personal faith—it is about structural redemption. It reminds us that resistance, led by the vulnerable, shakes even the most powerful. It calls the church to listen to the bleeding voices in our midst and to be interrupted by their truth. It is from the margins that renewal begins. Her touch, and the courage it carried, becomes our invitation to embody faith that disrupts injustice.

Prayer

God of the bleeding and the broken, may we, like the woman, reach toward you with courage. Heal this world marred by violence, and restore your image in every wounded place. Amen.



29 March Good Friday
Rev. Dr Van Biak Muan

Keeping the altar fire burning

“The fire on the altar must be kept burning; it must not go out. Every morning the priest is to add firewood and arrange the burnt offering on the fire and burn the fat of the fellowship offerings on it. The fire must be kept burning on the altar continuously; it must not go out.” (Leviticus 6:12-13)

To grasp the concept of daily sacrifice for purification, let us explore the two related sacrifices in the Old Testament and their fulfilment in the New Testament. The first sacrifice is the annual sin offering made by the high priest for the entire nation, using two goats to symbolize the cleansing and removal of sins, ultimately leading to God’s forgiveness. This sacrifice is also known as the Day of Atonement (Leviticus 16:1-28). The second sacrifice is burnt offering which God asks Israelites to offer daily. In burnt offering, various animals (from bulls to pigeons) can be offered, and the priest must add firewood to maintain the fire (Leviticus 1: 6-12).

These two sacrifices foreshadow the dual cleansing work of Jesus. The sin offering reflects Christ’s sacrifice on the cross, where Jesus, our high priest, offered himself once and for all for all humanity. This sacrifice pleased God, resulting in forgiveness for those who believe in Jesus. The burnt offering symbolizes Jesus’ continual cleansing of believers through his Spirit, just as the fire consumes the offering. Christ gives believers his Spirit, making their bodies his temple (1 Corinthians 6:19), and the Spirit continually cleanses them from their daily sins, making them holy and blameless before God (Ephesians 5:26-27).

A key difference between the sacrifices is that, in the first, believers receive forgiveness passively by faith, while in the second, as priests, they actively participate by offering their sins daily to the Spirit for cleansing, just as priests added firewood daily. Note that our participation is not about earning eternal life, which we have already received through faith in Christ. Instead, we need to work out

our salvation with “fear and trembling” (Philippians 2:12), cultivating a healthy fear of God and avoiding complacency. However, any success is attributed to God’s work, not our own, so we give glory to him alone (1 Corinthians 1:31).

Believers should prioritize confessing their own sins, offering them to the Spirit for purification, rather than on focusing on other’s sins. I would like to share a personal testimony. I was a heavy smoker, addicted for ten years, and thought quitting would be impossible. But when I submitted it to the Lord and made a genuine effort to quit, the Spirit empowered me to overcome it. The Spirit would not have burned it away if I had not submitted to him. Still, I could not take pride in quitting because it is not I, but Christ working within me (Philippians 2:13).

Similarly, we need to offer our struggles – selfish ambition, greed, immorality, jealousy, hatred, envy, etc. – to God, allowing the Spirit to purify us daily. We should make this a daily practice, offering ourselves to God for cleansing and sanctification, keeping the “fire” burning continuously (Leviticus 6:13). This sacrifice is an aroma pleasing to the Lord (Leviticus 4:31).

Prayer

“Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my thoughts. See if there is any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting” (Psalm 139:23-24). Dear Lord, help me identify the sins within me and submit them to you for purification, that I may glorify you by living a holy and blameless life. Amen.



The background of the image is a dark, atmospheric landscape. In the foreground, there are dark, silhouetted hills or mountains. In the middle ground, a range of mountains is visible, with some peaks appearing to have patches of snow or light-colored rock. The sky above is filled with dark, textured clouds, and a soft, hazy light emanates from the left side, creating a sense of depth and mystery.

APRIL



5 April Easter Sunday

Rev. Dr Alex Clare Young

Rising to hope

“Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the tomb... Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, “I have seen the Lord,” and she told them that he had said these things to her.” (John 20: 1-18)

Rising to our names

Mary. Simon Peter. The disciple Jesus loved. The gardener.

Names carry stories. Mary Magdalene—often misnamed, misrepresented—was the first witness to resurrection. She rose early, while it was still dark. She rose to grief, to confusion, to courage. Simon Peter—once Simon, renamed by Jesus—rose to leadership through failure and forgiveness. The unnamed disciple reminds us that love is not always labelled. And the gardener—was it Jesus in disguise, or was Jesus truly present in the ordinary worker, the one tending the earth?

Who are the unnamed saints today? The carers, cleaners, asylum seekers, food bank volunteers, climate strikers. The ones who rise early, while it is still dark. The ones who are misnamed, erased, or ignored. Resurrection begins when we rise to our names—and to the names of others.

Rising to God’s questions

“Woman, why are you weeping?”

“Whom are you looking for?”

Jesus begins not with answers, but with questions. Questions that honour grief. Questions that open space for truth. In a world of noise and certainty, God’s questions invite us to pause, to listen, to search.

What questions are we being asked today? Why are our neighbours weeping? Whom are we looking for in our politics, our churches, our streets? What questions are the poor asking us—about housing, dignity, justice? Rising to resurrection means rising to the questions that disturb us, that demand response, that call us into solidarity.

Rising to love

“Mary!”

“Rabbouni!”

This is not just recognition—it is relationship. Jesus calls Mary by name, and she responds with reverence, intimacy, and love. “Rabbouni” is more than “Teacher”—it is *my* teacher, *my* guide, *my* beloved. This is the heart of resurrection: not just life after death, but love after despair.

To rise to love is to rise to action. To rise to love is to rise to justice. To hear our names called by the risen Christ and to respond with our whole lives. What is our Rabbouni calling us to today? To dismantle systems of oppression. To build communities of care. To love with courage, not comfort.

Resurrection is not passive. It is radical. It is an uprising.

Rising to our names.

Rising to God’s questions.

Rising to love.

Prayer

Rabbouni, you rise among the grieving, the silenced, the dispossessed. Call us by name into resurrection resistance. Let our tears fuel justice, our witness disrupt empire, our love defy violence. May we proclaim not comfort, but transformation: “I have seen the Lord—alive in struggle, alive in hope.” Amen.



12 April Faith in action and mission
Rev. Thandar Tun

Empowered to go

*“Then he said to his disciples, ‘The harvest is plentiful, but the labourers are few; therefore ask the Lord of the harvest to send out labourers into his harvest.’”
(Matthew 9:37–38)*

Matthew 9:37–38 speaks powerfully about mission work, emphasising that mission starts with faith—not just believing, but also taking action. In Matthew 9:36, when Jesus looked out at the crowds, He felt compassion for them, recognising their needs and desires for hope. His response wasn’t just to feel sorry for them; it was to urge His followers to get involved and help.

My own journey to a mission trip in Brazil serves as an example of this call to action. I faced several obstacles—financial issues, travel plans that felt overwhelming, and my own uncertainties. Instead of backing down, I chose to pray and take bold steps forward. With help from a Council for World Mission grant, a Congregational Federation grant, and generous gifts from family and friends, I was reminded that when God calls us to do something, He also provides what we need.

As an introvert, sharing the Gospel in a busy market was not easy for me. However, by entirely relying on God and asking for the Holy Spirit’s guidance, I was able to have an incredible experience of sharing the Gospel, speaking about my faith, and overcoming my fears. This reminded me of a verse in Luke 12:12 that says, “For the Holy Spirit will teach you at that very hour what you ought to say.” I stepped into new places—markets, soup kitchens, and the homes of elderly people—and found my voice, empowered by the Spirit.

Mission work isn’t just for those who are confident or articulate; it’s for anyone willing to be used by God to share kindness and compassion. Romans 12:3-8 tells us that each of us has unique gifts, and when we offer those gifts in service, we become part of something bigger, like the body of Christ working together. Whether it’s helping in the community, providing meals, praying with people in need, or

speaking publicly despite our fears, my experience shows that we can carry out missions when we let our faith guide us.

Psalm 96 encourages us to “declare His glory among the nations.” This declaration is more than just words; it’s how we live. Through projects that serve meals, outreach events, and personal connections, my team and I brought the Gospel to life. We didn’t simply preach; we listened, served, loved, and showed compassion. That’s what Christ’s mission is all about.

Faith and mission go hand in hand. Faith gives us the courage to take action, and mission becomes the way we express that faith. When we step out, even if we’re nervous, we find that God meets us there, providing us with what we need—strength and purpose.

So, what does this mean for us today? It means that each of us is called to make a difference. There is still much work to be done, and the needs around us are significant. God is calling many of us to act. How can you respond to this call in your life? Will you step forward? Will you trust in God’s plan? Will you allow your faith to turn into action?

Prayer

Lord of the harvest, thank You for calling us to serve. Strengthen our faith so we can step out boldly, trusting in Your support and guidance. Help us use our gifts to bring hope, healing, and truth to those in need. May our lives reflect Your love and declare Your glory. In Jesus’ name, Amen.



19 April The path to new life
Dr Hsin-I Chien

A requiem for the last dance

*“And just as it is appointed for mortals to die once and after that the judgment...”
(Hebrews 9:27)*

“The Last Dance” is a hit Hong Kong film that has grossed over HK\$170 million. The movie explores life and death through the lens of Taoist funeral rituals. The Chinese title, “Po Dei Yuk,” which literally means “Breaking the hell’s gate,” stands in beautiful contrast to the deeply romantic English title, “The Last Dance.” The English title suggests to the Taoist master’s ritual of leaping over a basin of hellfire with a wooden sword—a final, powerful dance in tribute to the dead.

The film’s score is rich with Chinese instruments. The gongs and drums may sound lively, yet the suona (Chinese horn) wails with sorrow. Each gong strike feels like a solemn procession, urging the deceased onward, while mourners look away, as the pain of loss is too heavy.

Beyond the social and historical judgments that define a person’s life after death, people widely believe the soul faces a spiritual trial. In many religions and cultures, hell is a place where the departed are judged and punished. The “breaking the hell’s gate” ritual itself originates from the Buddhist tale of Mulian saving his mother, a filial son who, guided by the Buddha, successfully rescued his suffering mother from the underworld.

One of the film’s musical pieces is the Nanyin “Ten Halls of Justice” played on the erhu. Its lyrics describe the soul’s journey: “Leaving the underworld, exiting the gate of hell, the path is difficult with rain. They have died and gone to the underworld; may they not suffer.

After visiting the ten halls, help them be reborn soon. First, we visit the first hall, where King Qinguang presides. Looking up, I see the Nai He Bridge.” This song narrates how the soul, after traversing the Ten Courts of Hell, finds the Nai He Bridge (Bridge of Helplessness), drinks Meng Po Soup, and enters the cycle of reincarnation.

Similar to these traditions, the Requiem Mass and Requiem music also serve to comfort the departed. Among the great works of this kind, Mozart’s Requiem is particularly powerful. Written on his deathbed, this masterpiece is filled with a profound understanding of death and redemption.

The opening “Requiem aeternam dona eis” (“Grant them eternal rest, O Lord”) sets a solemn tone. In the “Kyrie” that follows, the repeated “e” sounds from the word “eleison” (mercy) become a fervent plea for compassion. It is a desperate, almost begging, cry for mercy, for we are all sinners.

The “breaking hell” ritual is meant to comfort the living, save souls, and clear their sins to prevent misfortune from passing to their future generations. The Requiem Mass is a service for the peace of the living and the repose of the dead. The Requiem music was not written for a performance; rather, it was for a funeral.

We are timid because we cannot escape death or its judgment. This is the emotion expressed in “Dies irae, dies illa” (“Day of wrath, day of anger”). Every note trembles with fear and cries out in the face of a higher power, making us feel small and unworthy.

The beloved “Lacrimosa” expresses ultimate sorrow, a tearful entreaty: “Lord Jesus, please mercifully forgive me.”

These rituals exist because people fear being held accountable after death in what they perceive as an unjust world. While the Requiem and “Ten Halls of Justice” have different tunes, they echo the same sentiments.

We may all wish to “break hell”—to escape the suffering of this world and avoid descending into hell after death. Yet, we are too weak to set our hearts on following Jesus. This is a constant struggle with our “old self,” and it’s why we continue to sin. While we know that human nature is weak and prone to sin, Christ’s incarnation gives us the hope to fight against it.

As Jesus once asked, “Do you love me more than these?” Perhaps we love our old selves and our own desires more than we love God. Only by dying with Jesus can we be reborn with him, as this is the path to new life that goes through death.

Prayer

Dear Heavenly Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am not worthy to be called your child, but you still wait for my return, arms open. You lead me away from evil, and your mercy triumphs over judgment. Thank you for being so good to me. Amen.



26 April Radical discipleship
Ebin Thankachan

Faith that disturbs: following Jesus in a world of persecution and peacebuilding

"Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when people revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you." (Matthew 5:10–12)

To follow Jesus is to embrace a **discipleship that disturbs**. The Beatitudes are not gentle words of comfort for the passive but radical declarations that overturn systems of power and privilege. When Jesus blesses the persecuted, He unveils a kingdom that stands in defiance of empire, violence, and exclusion.

In every generation, those who pursue righteousness have faced opposition. Today, religious persecution remains a global wound, cutting across faiths and borders. More than 380 million Christians experience discrimination or violence, while most minorities across the globe endure state-sponsored repression. Jewish communities encounter renewed antisemitism, and smaller groups such as Ahmadis and Bahá'ís live under legal and social persecution. These realities remind us that faith, politics, and justice are inseparable.

For the global CWM community, this text calls us to recognise that persecution is not only what we endure but also what we may inadvertently perpetuate through silence, privilege, or neglect. The cross of Christ reveals not only suffering but God's defiance of unjust powers that oppress humanity. Jesus was executed by the empire because His message threatened systems of dominance and control. As Gustavo Gutiérrez teaches, persecution is often the price of prophetic witness and solidarity with the poor.

Discipleship in this light becomes a global vocation of resistance and hope. We are called to stand with all who suffer for truth—Christians and non-Christians alike—and to embody a spirituality that refuses apathy. In a world marked by nationalism, racism, and religious hostility, the church must become a community of courageous love, crossing boundaries and building bridges of justice.

True peace, as the Scriptures affirm, is not the mere absence of conflict but the presence of justice. Isaiah reminds us, “The fruit of righteousness will be peace” (Isaiah 32:17). Jesus’ cleansing of the temple was not violence but holy disruption, confronting economic exploitation that dehumanized the poor. Likewise, peace-building today demands prophetic courage—resisting systems that oppress and cultivating relationships that heal.

As CWM partners across continents, we are invited to embody this radical discipleship—to rejoice, even in opposition, because our participation in God’s mission of justice and peace joins us with prophets, martyrs, and communities who dared to believe that another world is possible.

Prayer

God of justice and compassion, strengthen your global church to follow Jesus boldly. When faith leads to conflict, grant us courage; when discipleship demands sacrifice, give us grace. Unite us with the persecuted and empower us to build peace grounded in righteousness and love. Amen.

MAY





3 May Faith
Elinor Reynolds

We are still here

*“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)*

Here in Wales (or Cymru as we much prefer to say) at the moment, as Christians, we are on the wane. We have declining numbers in our churches, our demographic is aging, they are tired, our buildings are crumbling, they are also tired. Things are not looking good. These are hard truths for us to swallow.

We live on past glories and now we need to take a long hard look at ourselves. What do we see? Is it loss? But I'd like to look at this another way and ask, but what do we still have? We still have *us*, the people. The people are the church, still, today.

As congregationalists, we believe in the ministry of all the saints, and *we* the people are the saints. We are the agents of love here on God's earth. Even in this period of decline we must remember that this still holds true. We must also remember that we are essentially the same people as those whose hearts were set aflame by God's love during the 1904-05 revival, we are nor better or worse than our foremothers and fathers. This should spur us on.

Let's be careful not to be disheartened by a perceived decline, we forget that there is a time for everything, the world and nature has seasons too. Let me turn this decline on its head. Here in Cymru – and in Cymraeg-speaking Cymru – speaking a minoritised language in a small country beyond the westernmost part of Europe, I think it is frankly amazing that we are here at all! And yet, and yet, we are here, still. Our churches are here, still. We. Are. Here.

So, we look to the Bible for our strength and inspiration and find in Hebrews these encouraging words, words written during the time of the early church, when everything was uncertain ... so no change from that time to ours, and there's a strange reassurance to this.

In the light of these verses from the book of Hebrews we can use them to move on and up, and not become stymied in our past, disheartened, bogged down by history, defeated. We forget that in fact *we* are the history makers of tomorrow. Does that make us feel empowered and energised? It should. We can see this so-called decline as an opportunity, a chance, for we have nothing to lose. That in itself is exciting.

We walk in love with each other on this earth, and we need to spur each other on in that love to doing good deeds in this world. We should not give up.

Prayer

Lord, we thank you for your unending and unconditional love towards us, and for the love of Jesus Christ. The Bible has the answers to all our questions, our doubts and our fears. We give thanks for all the words of God that show us how to live our lives, for them to be our best lives. We are the agents of God's love here on this earth. Together. Amen.



10 May God and humanity
Rev. Rosanne Luxford

Being shaped, and helping to shape

"The word that came to Jeremiah from the Lord: 'Come, go down to the potter's house, and there I will let you hear my words... Now, therefore, say to the people of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem: Thus says the Lord: Look, I am a potter shaping evil against you and devising a plan against you. Turn now, all of you, from your evil way, and amend your ways and your doings.'" (Jeremiah 18:1-11)

Living in a world where strong individuality and independence is revered, are we open to being shaped as Christians?

Our passage from Jeremiah provides us with a wonderfully rich metaphor – of God as a potter – committed to the relationship with humanity. Just as the potter shapes the clay, breaks it, and reworks it, so God works with the people.

Like the potter, God is committed to the process of creating a fit vessel from the people, one that would better reflect the nature of the covenant relationship with God. We have the idea that in God's hands, the common clay of Earth can be transformed into something truly remarkable. But so often we want to do it on our own – make ourselves – and yet we can make big mistakes. God has amazing patience and faithfulness, willing to work with humanity, willing to start once more.

And it is refreshing to note that the **same** clay is used. It is reshaped, renewed. God is able to work with what God has.

We are blessed to have this wonderful gift from God—possibility for deep relationship and yet freedom as well; freedom to make choices and the other side of that is to have the consequences of those choices. And no doubt we all have made choices in our lives that we have come to regret. That is of course how we learn and grow as individuals. It is a continual shaping and reshaping of our lives.

As faith communities we also have this dynamic of shaping as part of what we do. Week by week, year by year, we gather for worship. We pray. We sing. We hear the scriptures read. We listen to sermons. We reflect. We are challenged. We are encouraged. We interact with others. This all helps to shape us in our faith life. In a sense, the church community has its own DNA. If we treat people with respect, they will feel a valued part of our community. If we treat our young people as a great gift, they will feel wanted and included.

If we treat newcomers with a friendly welcome, they will hopefully want to return. If we care for those in need, we are demonstrating God's love to the world. All of this adds up to who we are as a church community. Our church community gets shaped by our attitudes and way of living.

We think of how God continues to shape us. We get moulded, healed. We learn to trust. To know love. To have our attitudes challenged and maybe softened. To have our pathways shaped. Our faith encouraged. Our care for others nurtured. We continue to be shaped by the Divine. What a gift to treasure.

Prayer

Gracious God – thank you that you hold us in love, faithfully working with us in all the ups and downs of life. Shaping, healing, and encouraging us. Keep us open to that shaping and to know the joy of fullness of life in you. In Jesus' name. Amen.



17 May The renewal of all things
Samuel Toleafoa

The cries of creation are the echoes of hope

“We know that the whole creation has been groaning together as it suffers together the pains of labor” (Romans 8:22)

Have you ever wondered what it would sound like if creation itself could speak? If the ocean had a voice, if the forest could cry, if the skies could weep, what would they say? For us in the Pacific, we do not need to imagine too hard. We have heard those cries already. The sea rose and washed away homes, cyclones grew stronger and flattened villages, coral reefs once filled with colours and life turned white and lifeless. The groaning creation is real as we continue to witness the consequences of man’s pride and negligence. Yet, groaning is not just the Pacific documentary but a global story as well.

Paul once wrote about the struggles of the world in a way that speaks directly to our time. He admitted that life is full of suffering, yet he was convinced that the pain of the present does not compare with the glory that lies ahead. He imagined creation as if it were alive, waiting and longing for renewal. He pictured the whole world, not as something dying, but as a mother in labour, groaning in pain but waiting to bring forth new life.

Paul explained that creation did not choose this suffering. It was dragged into frustration because of humanity’s sin and brokenness. From the very beginning, when human beings chose their own way instead of God’s, the harmony between people and the earth was broken. The ground was cursed, and creation became part of the struggle of human disobedience. And ever since, the world has carried that weight, storms, decay, death, and destruction.

But Paul also shared a word of hope. He believed that creation’s groaning was not meaningless. Just as a mother endures the pain of childbirth in order to welcome a child, creation endures its pain in the hope of renewal. He pictured the day when the world will be set free from its bondage to decay and share in the freedom and glory of God’s children.

Paul said it is not only creation that groans. Humanity groans as well. Deep inside, we long for wholeness, for peace, for a world set right. We feel it in our bodies, in

our communities, and in our spirits. And yet, Paul said, we live in hope. Hope is what sustains us in the waiting. Even though we cannot yet see the full picture, we live with the assurance that God's promise will come to pass.

If creation itself is crying out for healing, how can the church remain quiet? This story challenges us to see our mission in a bigger way. We cannot ignore the cries of the earth. If the world is waiting for God's children to step forward, then we must live as faithful stewards of what God has entrusted to us. The mission of the church is not only to share the good news with our words but also to embody it in our actions, in how we treat each other, and in how we treat the world around us.

To care for creation is to honour its Creator. The earth is not ours to exploit; it is a gift placed in our hands to protect, nurture, and pass on to the next generation. Every simple act of care matters—planting a tree, reducing waste, cleaning a shoreline, teaching our children to respect the land. These may seem small, but they are acts of worship, signs that we belong to a God who renews all things.

Mission also means standing with those who suffer most from creation's brokenness, the poor, the vulnerable, the communities displaced by rising seas, droughts, or wildfires. To work for justice is part of the church's calling.

Yes, creation is groaning. The Earth cries out in storms, fires, and floods. But the story does not end there. In Christ, hope remains. The groaning of creation is not the cry of death but the cry of new life struggling to be born. Our task as the church is to live as people of hope, caring for the Earth and for one another, until the day when God renews all things.

Creation may groan, but we will answer with hope. Because the same God who raised Jesus from the dead will also raise creation into new life. Amen.

Prayer

Creator God, we hear the groaning of the Earth and the cries of your creation. Forgive us for the ways we have neglected or harmed it. Fill us with hope and courage to care for the world you have entrusted to us. Teach us to act with love, justice, and stewardship, to protect the vulnerable, and to live faithfully in your presence. May our hearts and hands join with creation's longing for renewal, until the day you make all things new. Give us strength to answer with hope and love, in Jesus' name. Amen.



24 May Pentecost Sunday

Rev. Dr SeungBum Kim

Tongues of fire, winds of freedom

“In the last days it will be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams.” (Acts 2:17)

Pentecost is often remembered as the birthday of the church, but at its heart it is the radical eruption of God’s Spirit into history. The Spirit did not descend upon palaces of power, nor upon the seats of empire, but upon a gathering of ordinary people. Fisherfolk, peasants, women, and foreigners were filled with fire. Their tongues proclaimed that a new world had begun. Pentecost was not merely a spiritual experience—it was a political sign of God’s liberation breaking into human history.

The first Pentecost gathered a crowd that was diverse and fragmented, representing nations long divided by language, culture, and class. The miracle was not that all suddenly spoke one language, but that each heard God’s liberating message in their own tongue. This stands in direct contrast to imperial domination, which erases difference and enforces uniformity. Pentecost reveals another way: the Spirit affirms diversity and chooses to speak through the voices of the marginalized.

Liberation theology reminds us that the Spirit always sides with the poor and oppressed. Just as tongues of fire rested on all, the Spirit today rests upon the landless farmers resisting dispossession, the workers demanding just wages, the migrants crossing borders for survival, and the communities struggling against ecological destruction. Pentecost proclaims that their cries are not silenced but become God’s own speech. To confess “Jesus is Lord” is to declare, with courage, that Caesar, Pharaoh, and today’s empires of greed and militarism are not.

The church born at Pentecost was never meant to be a comfortable institution; it was a Spirit-filled movement of solidarity. Its members shared possessions so that no one was in need, breaking bread across boundaries of class, gender, and status. Today, as the forces of neoliberal empire widen inequality and accelerate ecological destruction, the Spirit calls the church once more to be a sanctuary of resistance and a foretaste of God's justice.

Pentecost also reminds us that dreams and visions lie at the heart of faith. In contexts of oppression, to dream is itself a radical act. To envision land restored, justice rolling down like waters, and a community where all belong is to participate in the Spirit's imagination. The Spirit empowers us not only to denounce injustice but also to proclaim new possibilities—to live here and now as if God's future is already breaking into our midst.

As we celebrate Pentecost in 2026, let us remember that the Spirit poured out on all flesh is not a private comfort but a public power. It is the fire that ignites liberation, the wind that carries justice, and the language of love that dismantles oppression. To be Spirit-filled is to stand where Jesus stood—with the poor, the excluded, and the crucified—trusting that resurrection life is already breaking forth in our midst.

Prayer

Come, Holy Spirit—flame of freedom and breath of justice.
Kindle in us courage to resist oppression,
open our ears to the cries of the poor,
and awaken in us visions of your new creation.
Unite us as one body, many tongues,
living your love in the world. In the name of Jesus, Amen.



31 May Mission in the Pacific
Rev. Dr Amelia Koh-Butler

Enough rope

*“Then she let them down by a rope through the window, for her house was on the outer side of the city wall and she resided within the wall itself.”
(Joshua 2:15)*

The expression “enough rope” sometimes refers to the idea that “you need just enough rope to hang yourself with.” Mission is like that. We need just enough rope to be dangerous! If things are under our control, they are probably not free enough for us to be open to the transformation that only God can bring. This is the story of a woman who has enough rope to hang herself, and she puts herself in danger as a survival strategy.

Joshua’s spies are sent to Jericho and they find Rahab in the margins. Rahab, labelled a prostitute, is the missionary-survivor in the margins. She becomes the “insider” for Joshua’s spies because she “fears” God. Being both a prostitute, and one who fears God makes her an “outsider” for her own community in Jericho. The text tells us that she resides doubly in the margins. She uses red rope as both the symbol of her despised commodification and also as the hope of escape for the outsiders.

Rahab reminds us that those used by God are not always in the centre of acceptability. Those used by God are often pitted against leaders. It is not enough, however, to acknowledge (or confess) the marginalisation. The marginal life itself needs healing. It needs new ways to work together through our journeys towards survival and the hope of eventual wholeness.

Liberation theology uses solidarity to move towards resistance for the sake of justice and freedom. It assumes a movement from enslavement to choice. It is about breaking chains, or loosening the ropes that bind us.

In Pacific theology, solidarity leads to using islander ways, and refocusing on survival. For Pasifikas, the emphasis for life-flourishing is not about choices nor oppressions.

Decolonisation and self-determination will not themselves result in our survival (as desirable as they may be). In the islands, we dwell in the liquid margins of the world. Unconsciously, the rest of the world can destroy us without even leaving their homes, for we are dependent on the interconnections of the oceans. As plastic rubbish islands multiply (seven globally, five now in Pacific) and sea-levels rise, we bathe in the plastic and nuclear waste that will finally drown us with the tsunami of salty tears from the desecrated oceans.

Reduction strategies are needed to arrest destruction. However, restoration and repair require a commitment to replant the coral reefs, decontaminate ancient desert homelands, and invest in rebuilding for sustainable survival.

Have mercy, O God!

Prayer

We confess and commit to walk gently upon the nests of the land.

We are people who live in holiness with the “moana” to remind the people of justice and truth. (Jione Havea, Oct 2025)

The Lord’s Prayer to My Moana

Oh my Moana,

you are like my mother — for you feed me when I hunger,

you are like my father — for you carry me when I am lost.

You are like my sister and my brother,

for in your arms I laugh, I swim, I play,

I make memories that taste of salt and joy.

You are like my grandparent, ancient and wise,

watching as I teach my grandchildren how to live, how to heal,

how to breathe again in your cool embrace.

And as I sit in this Fare Poteé (bure) listening to the Word of God,

to the Lord’s Prayer, spoken by Rev. Jione, tears fall.

For when I was a child and when I get hurt,

I remember that pain — but I know, my Moana,

your pain is deeper than mine.

Your whole Ōpu Feetii or *kainaga*

your family of creatures, of reefs and tides and sand — is hurting.

We hurt you, when we throw rubbish into your hands,

when we crush your coral, when we let plastic drift like broken promises.

We make you carry the sins of the world — drugs that float in shame,

fuel that burns your breath, wounds that never heal.

Oh my Moana, forgive me.

I am deeply sorry for what I have done, for what we all have done.

And oh Lord —

Lead me not into temptation, but deliver me from the evil of carelessness,

the evil of greed, the evil of forgetting that You placed us here

to love, to protect, to serve Your creation.

For Thine is the ocean,

and the power,

and the glory,

forever and ever.

Amen.

(Fuata Varea-Singh)

JUNE







7 June Diversity in church
Deacon Tomitiana Eritama

Shoulder-to-shoulder in diversity

*“At that time I will change the speech of the peoples to a pure speech, that all of them may call on the name of the Lord and serve him with one accord.”
(Zephaniah 3:9)*

Within our church today, the governance practice reflects the influence of the London Missionary Society (LMS), promoting congregational and communal traditions, as well as dress codes in worship, and spiritual enrichment being established when the mission reached the Southern islands. On the other side, the American Board for Commissioners for Foreign Mission (ABCFM)’s first arrival in the Northern islands focused on building mission stations and institutional development, particularly the translation of the Bible into the local language.

Among the islands, diversity is commonly experienced, depending on tradition, culture, clan, or tribes, and languages, even though divisions occurred in tribal wars during the early period of the first two Christian missions.

As a Christian nation, the church tradition is rooted in the church *maneaba* tradition system, where everyone is equal; even the church leaders make decisions with one accord – literally “shoulder-to-shoulder.” As a gift of Christianity, the language proclaims to spread the Good News of our Lord Jesus Christ with one accord.

The world today often sees diversity as a reason for division. Different cultures, languages, races, denominations, political views, and international conflicts differentiate one from another. But Zephaniah 3:9 gives us a prophetic picture: people from many nations, once scattered and divided, are purified, united, and must serve God with one accord—literally, *shoulder-to-shoulder, unity, or solidarity*. It is God’s call for His church today: to acknowledge diversity in different contexts—our differences—but to stand together, shoulder-to-shoulder, in our diversity, serving the Lord.

God purifies diverse people and nations. *“I will change the speech of the peoples to a pure speech ...”*

In Zephaniah’s time, the nations lived with idolatry and lies. God promises spiritual transformation; purifying lips means purified hearts. The first arrival of Christianity changed our ancestors from pagans to Christians. It has transformed the lips full of hatred, idolatry, selfishness, greediness, oppression, to the lips of pure hearts showing love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. At Pentecost (Acts 2), the Spirit united many languages into one gospel message, for God’s glory and His great commission.

God calls us to serve shoulder-to-shoulder *“... that all of them may call on the name of the Lord and serve him with one accord ...”*

True unity comes not from politics, culture, or preference, but from calling on the same Name: the Lord as one family. Romans 10:13 – “Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.” At the cross, Jesus draws all people to Himself (John 12:32). The ground is level at the foot of the cross, showing diverse people with one Saviour.

Our diversity makes us stronger as brothers and sisters in Christ when we serve side-by-side in love. We should worship with pure hearts and minds in unity, and serve and support each other shoulder-to-shoulder, for our Lord Jesus Christ first carried us. He bore the cross on His shoulders and died on it, shouldering our sins.

Prayer

Gracious God, unite us in Your Spirit, purify our hearts and lips, and teach us to serve You shoulder-to-shoulder in love. May our diversity reflect Your beauty, our unity proclaim Your gospel, and our fellowship bear witness to Christ who carried the cross for us. Amen.



14 June Saving power of God
Rev. Tere Te Akaraanga-Marsters

The power to save: owning the Gospel in our time

“For I am not ashamed of the gospel; it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who has faith, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.” (Romans 1:16)

Gospel Day in the Cook Islands celebrates an important historical event that helped shape Christianity and today holds a deep nationalistic meaning to all its people in the Cook Islands. This day is recognized and respected at the highest level of governance and leadership of the country. The three pillars of society and culture in the Cook Islands are the traditional leaders, (*Aronga mana*), the church (*Evangelia*), and the government (*Ture*). These institutions are accepted as the foundation of Cook Islands' life.

This day is celebrated on 26 October and is recognised as a public holiday. It commemorates the arrival of Christianity in the Cook Islands in 1821 by the early missionaries and the London Missionary Society. The day focuses on the significance of three specific areas:

1. **Historical event** that focuses on a pivotal moment in Cook Islands history,
2. **Cultural identity** that reiterates the profound biblical influence on culture and our identity as Cook Islanders,
3. **Community celebration** that fosters collaboration and creates opportunity for all to celebrate their faith and history.

The day is commonly known as Gospel (*Nuku*) Day and involves the combining of the Cook Islands Christian Church (CICC), six local churches (*ekalesia*), and they are joined by other churches and the wider community on the Island of Rarotonga.

When dignitaries and invited guests are seated, a combined parade commences the celebration followed by an opening prayer service. Each church chooses how they will present the allocated biblical theme and text passages.

The celebration consists of marching and singing, cultural enactments of biblical events, and elaborate productions. Each item involves lively performances by individuals and groups, singing modern contemporary songs, composed traditional hymns (*Imene Metua*), or Sunday School songs (*Imene Apii Sabati*). The attire varies from traditional costumes to all white dress, a common attire seen in church and public services. The celebration is concluded with a feast (*kaikai*).

Prior to Gospel Day, preparations, plans, and discussions are already underway for the next year's celebration to ensure that we continue to own the Gospel in our time.

The Apostle Paul, the writer of our text in Romans 1:16, reminds everyone who gathers that the Gospel remains the source of power, hope, and transformation. It is also about remembering and affirming the power of the Good News that coincides with the first message preached from Luke 19:10: "For the Son of Man came to seek out and to save the lost." This helps to reflect on the past with respect, celebrate the present with joy, and step into the future with faith.

Kia Orana (may you all live a long and fulfilling life), *e kia manuia* (best wishes).

Prayer

Lord, we thank You for the Gospel of Jesus Christ that is not limited, neither restricted to one race, colour, or language but is a gift to all. Increase our courage to believe and to proclaim the Gospel. Help us to worship and serve you, and make Jesus known to all people. Amen.



21 June Youth

Laura Harry

Young lives matter

"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)

In a world where young voices are often overlooked or undervalued, Paul's words to Timothy come as a bold declaration: Young lives matter. This verse is not just encouragement; it's a call to purpose. Paul challenges Timothy, a young leader, to rise above the doubts of others and to prove through his life that age is no limitation in God's hands.

This message is especially powerful today. Society sometimes sends the message that youth equals inexperience or immaturity, but God sees differently. He calls young people to lead by example, not through power or title, but through character.

The Kingdom of God does not wait for age; it responds to availability, humility, and faithfulness.

Paul outlines five key areas where young believers can shine: speech, conduct, love, faith, and purity. These are not small tasks, but they are attainable when rooted in Christ. Speech reminds us that our words carry weight, they can heal or hurt, inspire or divide.

Conduct is about how we carry ourselves, in school, at home, online, and in the world. Love is the heartbeat of the gospel, selfless, forgiving, and active. Faith speaks to trust in God, even when the future feels uncertain. Purity challenges young people to live with integrity in a culture that often glorifies compromise.

“Young lives matter” is more than a slogan, it’s a truth grounded in Scripture. God has always used young people for powerful purposes: David faced Goliath as a teen, Mary carried Jesus in her youth, and Jeremiah was called as a prophet while still young.

Your voice, your life, your faith—they all matter deeply to God. Don’t wait to be older to make an impact. Lead now. Love now. Live for Christ now. Let the world see that being young is not a weakness but a strength when surrendered to God.

Prayer

Lord, help us to be an example in our words, actions, love, faith, and purity. Strengthen the young people to lead by living like You. Remove fear or doubt, and let our lives reflect Your truth and grace every day. Amen.



28 June Children
Taobe Roboam

Where do I begin?

“Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it.” (Proverbs 22:6)

I was raised in a conservative environment that emphasized *“te reirei e moa man te mwenga”* (education starts at home). In this setting, my grandparents and parents imparted essential skills, behaviors, and guidance, particularly concerning a Christian life. Every action we take is often evaluated through the lens of how our parents raised us.

During our daily devotional gatherings, my grandfather used to remind us about the red button—not to press it. This meant that if something feels wrong in our hearts, we should avoid doing it; otherwise, we would find ourselves in trouble. Don’t press the red button.

Today, we are confronted with numerous struggles such as injustice, war, discrimination, family separation, and overwhelming hatred. Have we paused to reflect on the reasons behind these issues in our communities?

The challenges we face today, mirror those encountered by early Christians. Humanity’s mindset has not been guided according to God’s will. Additionally, we are currently overexploited by technology. We give our phones to entertain our children, replacing precious moments of connection and teaching with screens. This can greatly impact a child’s mindset.

Reflecting on Proverbs 22:6, we recognize that God has blessed us with the profound duty of nurturing our children, instilling in them the love of God through Christ Jesus. Our goal should be to guide them in the ways of the Lord, ensuring their minds are filled with love and compassion for their purpose and for all of creation.

Observing children engaged with their phones day and night is a troubling trend. They risk missing out on vital life lessons, and their minds become overly controlled by technology, with inappropriate displays online leading to potential neurological and visual health issues. This trend may be a significant contributor to the struggles we face today.

As Proverbs 1:7 states, if we educate and guide our children in the ways of the Lord, they will understand and revere God, receiving wisdom and knowledge in abundance.

Where do I begin? Let us prioritize God and welcome our Lord Jesus Christ into our hearts, minds, and homes as we strive to fulfill His calling to guide our children towards a flourishing life within the family and church community.

This challenges us as followers of Christ. May our words, actions, and thoughts be rooted in Christ Jesus, demonstrating inclusivity, love, and respect for one another.

Prayer

Merciful and Gracious God, we ask that You guide our hearts, minds, and souls to revere You. Grant us wisdom to train our children in Your ways amidst a world filled with hatred and evil, so that they may always walk in Your light. Amen.



JULY





5 July Babel

Rev. Dr Brian Kolia

Hard for God to ignore

“Now the whole earth had one language and the same words. And as they migrated from the east, they came upon a plain in the land of Shinar and settled there... So the Lord scattered them abroad from there over the face of all the earth, and they left off building the city.” (Genesis 11:1-8)

Was God worried that this building would eventually reach the heavens? Verse 6 says: *“Look, they are one people, and they have all one language; and this is only the beginning of what they will do; nothing that they propose to do will now be impossible for them.”*

In the book of Genesis, humans wanting to be like God is something that God finds hard to ignore. God had come down in Genesis 3 and walked the garden, after God sees that Adam and Eve wanted to be like God. Here in Chapter 11, God comes down again, as God sees that the people wanted *to be* God—to reach the heavens where God resided.

For the author/s of Genesis, *wanting* to be like God may have been a prevalent attitude at the time, particularly during the times of the Babylonians and Persians, who in their colonial rule of Judah, sought to be like gods.

The actions of the people in the text were representative of the Babylonian colonisers, who in their centralized government wanted its subjects to come together in the one place, and learn the one culture and the one language.

The name Babel, as some scholars have suggested, is a clue that points this text to Babylon. For the people of Judah who suffered at the hands of Babylon, believing in God as One who would not ignore the sins of the colonisers, was to trust that justice would surely come. In a way like how God comes down and disrupts and scatters the people of Babel all over the earth, so that the earth would be filled and that the rest of creation may flourish.

The idea that God could not ignore their “sins,” therefore, when read in light of this historical background, is a call for justice. A call for empire to cease acts of colonialism that bring pain and suffering to the marginalized, creating fear and terror in families, women and children who cannot defend themselves.

Family of Christ, this theme brings us to think about injustices in the world. There are many empires in today’s society, that continue to build their “large towers,” to establish their monstrous empires and impose god-like rule on its subjects.

In the process, they bring destruction to the world around them:

Whether it's the capitalist system that continues to wreak economic havoc on the world, bringing world poverty to greater heights, while the rich become even more richer.

Whether it's large corporations whose actions cause environmental devastation. Whether it's governments who in their acts of colonialism bring genocide to native peoples; causing displacements from their homes.

Displacing Palestinians, Sudanese, Ethiopians, and Myanmarese.

Oppressing Kanaky and West Papua; submerging Tuvalu, Tokelau, Kiribati, and the Marshall Islands, living in repeated anguish and fear over the climate catastrophe.

It was hard for God *not* to ignore the ascendancy of the people, who sought to make a name for themselves. This was no liberation movement, but like the Babylonians, this was an attempt to maintain power in the one place. The gracious call after the flood to fill the world and multiply was being rejected; this was colonial arrogance!

Let this be a call for us to disperse our convictions and our sense of advocacy to the rest of the world. To open our eyes and see the injustices, so that we not ignore the actions (or inaction) of fascist rulers, who seek to maintain power and control. Choosing totalitarianism over embracing diversity and solidarity in that diversity.

It is also a call for us as Christians, to be far more justice-oriented than we are. To be far more conscious of the wrongful acts of oppression around us than we are. By coming down—as God came down—and standing as allies with the persecuted and marginalized in our spaces.

For Jesus Christ also came down, to bring justice and peace for a broken world. His death and resurrection brought new life, and allowed for us to reconcile and heal our brokenness, so that we may continue the fight for justice and peace.

To God be the glory, now and forever more!

Amen

Prayer

God of justice, teach us to “come down” in humility and compassion, to recognize the injustices around us, and to be present with those who are oppressed, marginalized, excluded, and colonized—to act as beacons of hope, justice, and peace. In Jesus’ name, Amen.



12 July Faithfulness

Rev. Mataafa Palenapa Sauaso

Offer the “First Fruits” to God

“Speak to the people of Israel and say to them: When you enter the land that I am giving you and you reap its harvest, you shall bring the sheaf of the first fruits of your harvest to the priest.” (Leviticus 23:10)

When the Christian faith first came to the Pacific, the missionaries were faithful in bringing the gospel, but along with it, they often condemned many of our Indigenous rituals, seeing them as un-Christian. In doing so, they unintentionally broke apart the ways our ancestors connected spiritually to the land, the ocean, and the sacred presence of God, what we call *mana*.

Take, for example, the traditional Samoan agricultural ceremony of the “First Fruits.” In many villages, untitled men would gather the very first produce from their plantations and present it to the village council. These gifts were then blessed and shared among the community. The heart of this ritual was thanksgiving, a way of saying, God, we thank you for the blessings of the land. Sadly, as Christianity grew and Western influence spread, this significant practice began to fade from our villages.

The Israelites had a similar practice, the Festival of First Fruits, as described in Leviticus 23. It was celebrated each spring at the beginning of the barley harvest. The first sheaves were brought to the priest as an offering to the Lord. This process was more than just a harvest celebration; it was a holy reminder that God had been with them since Mount Sinai, giving them His Torah, His word, to guide them in living. Bringing the first fruits was an act of devotion, a way of saying, “Lord, we remember what you have done, and we give you the best of what we have.”

Brothers and sisters in Christ, this message is for us today. It is a call to pause and reflect on the meaning of our own traditions and rituals. Many of them have been lost under the weight of Western culture and colonial history. But at the same time, Christianity gave us a renewed identity and a deeper way of understanding God.

Our Samoan ancestors, in their own way, gave thanks to God through the offering of first fruits. Just as Israel remembered God's faithfulness through their harvest celebrations, we too are called to remember that God is still with us, providing for us, guiding us. And now, we Christians see Jesus Christ as the ultimate First Fruit, the One who died and rose again so that the whole world might have eternal life. Amen!

Prayer

Loving God, we thank you for the gift of life and for every blessing from the land, the sea, and the air. All we have is from you, and we offer our gratitude back to you. In Your great love, you gave us Jesus Christ, the First Fruits of salvation for the whole world. Amen.



19 July CWM Sunday

Prof. Dr Kenneth Ross

Mission as *kenosis*

"Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness." (Philippians 2:5-7)

I hope you are reading this in a peaceful place. Regrettably, many places in today's world are far from peaceful. In fact, the 2020s have ushered us into a new age of conflict and warfare, with technological advances unleashing ever more destructive weaponry. The powerful nations of the world are flexing their muscles. The five largest economies in the world are either fighting a war or arming themselves for one. Donald Tusk, Polish prime minister and former president of the European Council, has warned that Europe is in a pre-war era: "I don't want to scare anyone but war is no longer a concept from the past," he said.

Indications are that we are reverting to a system of "might is right" where great powers fight it out for territory and influence. Powerful leaders show disdain for the international rules-based order and for mechanisms to resolve disputes by peaceful means. Instead, they take a macho posture, interested only in advancing their own interests and asserting their power. It is human aggression that is propelling the new age of militarisation.

When this is the *zeitgeist*, we need to make sure that our life of faith does not head in the same direction, becoming aggressive, combative, and macho. It can be all too easy to start thinking of mission in terms of power plays through which we assert ourselves and defeat others.

Christian witness today will be convincing not when it mirrors the power plays of our contemporary world but when it challenges them by taking an entirely different direction. Instead of asserting ourselves, we empty ourselves. Instead of aiming

to dominate others, we serve them. Instead of trying to coerce others to conform to our ideology, we come alongside in humility – ready to learn and make common cause.

For Christian mission to extricate itself from complicity with colonialist patterns that have earned it a bad name, it needs to discover afresh the mind of Christ. The way of Christ leads in the opposite direction to that of the colonialist. To have the mind of Christ is a matter of self-emptying, service and sacrifice. Authentic Christian mission is a matter of *kenosis* (self-emptying).

The German theologian Karl Barth warned that, “The community of Jesus Christ ... has to represent the cause of Jesus Christ, but this will slip through its hands if it confuses its ministry with the attempt to secure certain advantages, successes or triumphs for itself. It can represent His cause, if at all, only with decided selflessness and therefore the firm renunciation of any self-assertion or self-promotion.”

If we want to be true to Christ, he continued, we “can only try to serve and not to control the world, which needs service and not dominion, liberation and not enslavement, elevation and not suppression” (Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics* IV 3.2).

Prayer

We worship you, O God, for the wonder of your gift of Jesus Christ, our Lord. We marvel at his pathway of humility, service, and sacrifice. Forgive us that, so often, we have sought to gain power for ourselves and to dominate others. Grant that, by the power of your Holy Spirit, we might have the mind of Christ and become transforming disciples – for your glory and praise. Amen.



26 July Faithful focus

Melba Menke

Keep your focus on God

“Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.” (Romans 12:2)

As young children, we were taught how to behave and to be polite, to be respectful, and to love others. We learned a lot about the Bible, from church fellowships and during family devotions.

As we become older, life began to change. Priorities and choices changed, perspectives and lifestyles changed, and our focus shifted.

We allowed our flesh to take control and fed it with what it wanted, everything that is ungodly and of the world, putting aside what we were taught and grounded in.

In this time and era, where young people are drawn far from the Holy Word, we need to shift back our focus to be back on God.

Young people, being our future leaders, need to be grounded in the Word of God, to be led by the Holy Spirit, and to be in God's favour in every step they take.

Prayer

Almighty God, creator of heaven and earth, the artist of all human beings. Lord, you specifically created each human being a masterpiece, with love and every good thought, granted wisdom, and given full authority to become caretakers of the sky, sea, and land.

Lord, You know our every thought and our hearts' desires; if we ever stray from Your will, we ask that You keep us focused on You and Your word, and on the purpose that You have planned for us.

We pray for guidance from Your Holy Spirit, to lead us and help us to remain faithful to Your calling, so that others may see You through our works and glorify you, I ask these in the mighty and powerful name of Jesus. Amen.





AUGUST



2 August Lost and found

Rev. Garo Kilagi

Return to God

“Then Jesus said, ‘There was a man who had two sons. The younger of them said to his father, ‘Father, give me the share of the wealth that will belong to me.’ So he divided his assets between them. A few days later the younger son gathered all he had and travelled to a distant region, and there he squandered his wealth in dissolute living. When he had spent everything, a severe famine took place throughout that region, and he began to be in need. So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that region, who sent him to his fields to feed the pigs. He would gladly have filled his stomach with the pods that the pigs were eating, and no one gave him anything.” (Luke 15:11-16)

The parable of the lost son, found in Luke 15:11-32, presents a story that explores themes of repentance, forgiveness, and restoration. The decision to return to the father illustrates a step of faith.

Life before lost—Luke 15:11-12

The younger son, living under the care of his father, enjoys the comfort that comes with being part of a loving household. However, the attraction of independence and the desire for self-discovery lead him to seek his inheritance prematurely, ultimately setting the stage for his journey into loss and separation.

The son’s decision to leave home in pursuit of self-discovery leads to a plain difference between his former life and his new experience. The desire for personal fulfillment can often outshine the appreciation of what is available.

Life while lost – Luke 15:13 -16

The parable offers an insight into the experience of being lost, both physically and spiritually. The son, in his mission for independence, squanders his inheritance on reckless living. The journey into an empty life serves as a warning to individuals who drift from their values.

As the son reaches the depths of his despair, he finds himself in a terrible situation, feeding pigs and eating from the same food. This moment of realization marks a turning point in his life. It reflects the universal truth that, in times of

hardship, individuals may come to recognize their need for redemption and the importance of returning to their foundational beliefs.

Life after lost – Luke 15:17

Coming to his senses seems to carry the idea of repentance. Life without senses is incomplete. Sin hinders our spiritual senses. The motivation for his return was hunger, but it was specifically to his father that he wanted to return. He admitted that his sins were ultimately against God. The son knew he had no right to return as a son, having taken and squandered his inheritance. He therefore planned to earn his room and board.

The father's response upon the son's return summarizes the themes of unconditional love and acceptance. Rather than punishing him for his past mistakes, the father embraces him with open arms, showing the transformative power of compassion. This act serves as a reminder that no matter how far one may have lost the path to redemption, it is always available.

Returning to the father – Luke 15:18 – 24

The son's realization of his dire circumstances prompts a moment of self-examination. He recognizes that even the servants in his father's household live better than he, which leads him to return home, seeking forgiveness and reconciliation. This act of returning symbolises a critical turning point and the courage it takes to seek redemption.

The father's response to his son's return is a powerful testament to absolute love and forgiveness. Rather than chastising his son for his past, the father embraces him with open arms, celebrating his return with joy and festivity. This reaction shows the transformative power of love and the capacity for healing within relationships.

Prayer

Father God, forgive us for the times we trusted our own strength, leaned on our own wisdom, and neglected your voice. Cleanse us from pride, restore our joy, and renew our desire to walk in your ways. We return not just with words, but with surrendered lives. Weary from wandering and longing for home. Like the prodigal, we have chased shadows and forgotten the warmth of your embrace. Yet your mercy calls us back—not with condemnation, but with love.

Thank you for always waiting, and for always loving.

We return to you, our Father, our refuge, our joy. Amen.



9 August The mystery of faith

Assoc. Prof. Dr Dianne Rayson

God of the dirt

“For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him God was pleased to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, by making peace through the blood of his cross.” (Colossians 1:19-20)

These words are part of a very early Christological hymn in circulation by the time Paul wrote to the Colossians. It is a hymn portraying the mediation of Christ: in creation, and in reconciliation. It uses wisdom imagery, reminding us that Christ is in and through all things and has been for eternity. Christ is present through all time and space.

But one of those most mysterious and esoteric parts of the entire New Testament is also the text that is so earthy.

Do you ever feel like the gospel we hear preached is otherworldly? A gospel that prioritises heaven over Earth, that focusses on an individual’s interior rather than a community’s life, that looks to the future at the expense of the past and present?

This type of otherworldliness has dualism at its heart. That is the practice of breaking things up into two parts, binaries, one or the other, and where one is superior to the other.

Dualistic thinking has led to hierarchies of humans over animals and men over women, for example. It has supported the colonial project of whiteness being superior to black and brown people. It is still used, in some places, to prohibit the full ministry of women and other non-men within the church.

Dualism supports otherworldliness—that heaven (a different place) in the future (a different time) is superior to life on Earth as we experience now. Whilst our Christian hope does invite us to await with expectation a time when God’s kingdom can be fully experienced, the gospel does not dismiss the gift of this life on Earth.

Jesus invites us to remember we come from Earth, and that He came from Earth and is within the land on which we walk, in the dirt in which we place our hands to till our gardens. Christ is under our fingernails and in our lungs as we breathe the rich scent of the forest or the salt spray of the ocean. The incarnation of Christ validates not only human bodies, but all of creation. Every body.

Not only that, but all of creation is reconciled to Christ. The blood of the cross reconciled all things to God, as all reality is drawn up into the mystery of God. The mystery and the dirt together. A unified reality. Our allegiance to Christ is bound up in our commitment to each other and Earth.

Prayer

God of heaven and Earth, of all things seen and unseen, God among us and within us: Help us listen deeply to your Spirit in the wind and the waters, taste you in the salt, and smell you in the fragrance of our gardens. Renew our commitment to our Mother Earth. Amen.



16 August Miracles

Aisuklang Kharkongor

God of wonders

“You are the God who works wonders; you have displayed your might among the peoples” (Psalms 77:14)

Psalm 77:14 declares about the God who could work wonders at any time and in any situation of life. He works wonders to lift those who desperately need his help. God worked wonders by delivering the Israelites from slavery in Egypt (Exodus 12 onwards; 20:2).

God’s wonderful deed in the Red Sea gives way for the Israelites to move ahead to their destination (Exodus 14). God works wonders in the wilderness when people needed water and food to quench their thirst and hunger (Exodus 16-17). God performed wonders upon people suffering from different kinds of sickness and diseases. To cite one example, Jesus healed a woman who suffered from hemorrhage for 12 years (Mark 5:25-34), and many others.

Our God, who works wonders yesterday, is still performing wonders today, and he will be performing tomorrow, too. A short testimony of how God works wonders in my life.

I was serving as a faculty member in a theological college for eight years, from June 2014 to April 2022. The need of the time to have a PhD degree for those in a teaching career, and the desire of my heart for further studies, is the situation of my life.

I have no sources from myself and from my family to pursue a doctoral programme. I have had an experience of God’s wonderful deeds during my bachelor’s degree from 2007 to 2011, where God used a well-committed Christian family to sponsor my studies, and also during my master’s degree from 2012 to 2014 through CWM

as the sponsoring body. The experience of God's faithfulness gives me the courage to move ahead in processing the formalities of my PhD career.

At first, I submitted the application form to the United Theological College (UTC) and at the same time, I applied for the CWM scholarship through the Presbyterian Church of India, which is the only hope of my life. After the interview, I was very glad that I was selected for the doctoral programme at UTC.

Despite having no funds and no proof of scholarship, by faith, I joined the institution in June 2022. Of course, I started the course by faith and hope, but at the same time, I was well prepared that I would drop out of my studies and continue with my ministry if CWM does not sponsor me this time. God never lets the faithful down and by his grace, in the month of July 2022, I received the approval letter from CWM confirming my scholarship. My heart was overjoyed and my faith was strengthened.

God of wonders served as a source of hope, strength, and encouragement for those in need. He can open ways at any time; in the same way, God sees the desire of our heart, the strength of our faith and hope. Have faith and fully trust God, for he is the God of wonders from the Old Testament time, to the New Testament time, and until today. Our God is the same yesterday and today and forever (Hebrews 13:8).

Prayer

Oh God of wonders, we believe that the prayers of a broken heart will be answered in your due time. Amen.



23 August Hope

Rev. Suchitra Behera

A light in the hour of trial

“Though the fig tree does not blossom, and no fruit is on the vines; though the produce of the olive fails, and the fields yield no food; though there are no sheep in the pen, and no cattle in the stalls; yet I will rejoice in the Lord; I will exult in the God of my salvation.” (Habakkuk 3:17-18)

As we look at Bangladesh in 2024-25, we see a nation grappling with a multitude of challenges. The political landscape is in flux following the fall of a longstanding government, leading to uncertainty in leadership and governance. This period of transition has emboldened various groups, escalating unrest and tension in border and ethnic regions.

Moreover, the country is facing economic hardships, with soaring prices of staple foods and fuels exacerbating poverty and inequality. The inflation rate remains high at around 10%, and joblessness, particularly among the youth, is a significant burden on the nation's morale.

Amid these challenges, minority communities face harassment and violence, and the rule of law struggles to provide justice and protection. Environmental threats like climate change loom, promising future hardships as agricultural lands and territories face loss through flooding and rising seas.

Yet, in this season of hardship and uncertainty, the scripture reminds us to hold fast to hope and faith. The prophet Habakkuk's words speak to a people who see abundance vanish but choose to rejoice in God's salvation anyway. This teaches us that even when our environment is unstable, when food becomes scarce, or peace feels distant, our joy can be rooted in God, not circumstances. Our faith is a source of comfort in these trying times.

For Bangladesh, this is a time to seek restoration—whether in political reform, social justice, economic recovery, or climate resilience. It is a time for people and leaders to work together in humility and courage. Our hope is renewed not by the

swift turnaround of events but by the steadfast love and faithfulness of God, who can bring light into darkness and strength into weakness. Together, we can make a difference.

Like the fig tree in the parable, Bangladesh may temporarily lose its fruitfulness, but it is not lost. The seeds of resilience, faith, and community are being planted. The promise is that rejoicing in God fuels endurance and inspires progress even in the bleakest seasons. This resilience is a beacon of hope, showing that even in the face of adversity, Bangladesh can and will endure.

May this reflection catalyze prayerful action and a source of renewed hope for all who are invested in the future of Bangladesh.

Prayer

God of mercy, guide Bangladesh through this time of trial. Grant peace to its leaders, courage to its people, and justice for the oppressed. May your love restore hope, nourish strength, and bring light where there is darkness. Sustain us all by your grace. Amen.



30 August Christian unity
Lalhriatpuii Hmar

The heart of Jesus: a prayer for unity

“I ask not only on behalf of these but also on behalf of those who believe in me through their word, that they may all be one. As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me.” (John 17:20-21)

The prayer, found in John 17, is often called the “High Priestly Prayer” because Jesus, like a high priest, intercedes on behalf of his people. It is His deepest desires, concerns, and hopes for the believers.

At the very core of this prayer lies a profound plea for unity. The context is striking: Jesus is facing the ultimate sacrifice. He knows the suffering that awaits him. He is aware of the betrayal, the pain, and the death. Yet, in this moment of immense personal trial, His thoughts are not primarily focused on himself but on his disciples and those who will come to believe through their message. This selflessness is a hallmark of Jesus’s character and a powerful lesson in what it means to live for others.

The very heart of Jesus’ prayer is that all believers may be ONE; it’s a deep desire expressed in the face of his impending death. He wants us to experience a UNITY that mirrors the perfect unity that exists within the heart of God.

The unity envisioned here is not organizational or doctrinal uniformity, but a spiritual oneness that goes much deeper than structural unification. The unity rooted in Christ—a bond that transcends differences of background, tradition, culture, gender, and perspective—affirms that all believers are members of the one body of Christ. For Christians, this prayer reminds us of Christ’s ongoing intercession and call us to embody sanctification, unity, and mission.

Unity is not an end in itself but a witness to the world; when the world sees believers loving one another, supporting, and working together despite their differences, it testifies the reality of God's love and the transformative power of the gospel. Unity is both a gift and calling; we are to pursue it by immersing ourselves in deep understanding of Scripture, by focusing on our union with Christ, practicing sacrificial love.

Acknowledging and celebrating the glimpses of unity that exist within the church, we also lift up the weak in justice and compassion. The unity Jesus prayed for is both our identity and our witness, a call to live as one so that the world may know God's love.

Prayer

Dear God, today we understand the call to unity is a call to action. It's a call to examine our hearts, to identify any divisions we may have, and to actively seek reconciliation and understanding. It's a call to love one another as Christ has loved us, to demonstrate to the world the power of the gospel. Please help us embrace this prayer of Jesus, not just as a beautiful passage of Scripture, but as a challenge and a guide for our lives. So, we can strive for the unity that Jesus prayed for, so that the world may believe and know the love of God. In Jesus' name, Amen.

SEPT



MBER





6 September Mission: church in action
Rev. Nigel Lindsay

Connecting with God and community

After a long time the master of those slaves came and settled accounts with them. Then the one who had received the five talents came forward, bringing five more talents, saying, "Master, you handed over to me five talents; see, I have made five more talents." 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." And the one with the two talents also came forward, saying, "Master, you handed over to me two talents; see, I have made two more talents." 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." Then the one who had received the one talent also came forward, saying, "Master, I knew that you were a harsh man, reaping where you did not sow, and gathering where you did not scatter seed; so I was afraid, and I went and hid your talent in the ground. Here you have what is yours." (Matthew 25:19-25)

Many of us who attend churches have a pile of resources, money, houses, businesses, knowledge, and skills. Some of us may be retired and have time, which is such a valuable resource. I wonder: has God given us all this so we can sit on it and look out on our struggling, hurting neighbour?

When I lived as a Partner in Mission in Grenada, the sitting room in my house was bigger than the whole house lived in by a woman in the church I served. She had three children, one of whom was unable to walk. The house was at the top of a steep hill and on stilts with steps going up. What can we do to show Jesus' Kingdom values of love and justice for those in need?

Many are proud people and want to maintain their own dignity and so sometimes hide the struggles they experience day in and day out. It is not wise to give to people and so create a dependence culture, but it is right to empower people so they can make life better for themselves. In this Bible passage (Matthew 25: 20-23) two out of three people use their money well and are able to make a better life for themselves and probably their families.

Following Hurricane Beryl in Grenada in 2024 we became aware of those struggling and were able to offer some training in restarting/starting and managing a

small business using skills of people in the church. Each family could then receive a grant to start the business. Some bought goats, pigs, chickens, herbs, food, etc. A year on, most have used the resource well and have grown, sold, and bought increased amounts of new stock. A few have used the money for other things and now need more. I have done this in a number of settings in different countries; we all learn from mistakes, but if we get 70% success, it is worth it and we have shown God's love to those in our community.

Many of our traditional churches are getting smaller as people choose to opt out of any Christian commitment or go to more lively denominations. People need to see we care about their physical, and spiritual needs. Jesus demonstrated that. This doesn't result in 70% making a Christian commitment, but it does change people's views of the group entering a strange building on Sundays—and maybe one day they will enter.

Each community is unique with different needs, as is each collection of people meeting in a building such as the local church. Check out the needs in your area. What skills and resources do you have as a local church? What is God already doing in your community?

Then step out—small steps to start. What's great is that you don't have to do it alone; God is with you, and let's not do it **to** people in our community but do it **with** people in our community. When we do it **with** people, they can contribute, feel part, and feel they belong. When they belong, God does his stuff and they make a Christian commitment.

Let's not shy away from encouraging a Christian commitment alongside empowering those in need to glean (Ruth 2:8): *"So Boaz said to Ruth, "My daughter, listen to me. Don't go and glean in another field and don't go away from here. Stay here with the women who work for me."*

Prayer

Heavenly Father, we all have physical needs and spiritual needs; through your Son Jesus, you showed us how he met physical needs of those around him and, through that, for many, their spiritual journey started.

We thank you that you have given us resources of money, buildings, transport, and skills. Help us to use those precious resources for the good of those in our communities so they are empowered, understand Kingdom values, and want to be part of your Kingdom.

Give us wisdom; guide, protect, and grow us on our faith journey.

We ask this in Jesus' name.
Amen.



13 September Christian witness
Sr. Pathappallil Joseph Jesseena

Called to be the church of the wounded healer

“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)

In today’s fragmented world, where suffering takes many forms, be it through caste violence, gender inequality, war, climate destruction, or spiritual despair, the church is not called to retreat into comfort. We are called to become the church of the wounded healer, following in the footsteps of Christ, who bore our sins to bring healing and hope.

Embrace the wounds of the world with compassionate solidarity

Christ’s suffering on the cross was not a distant theological event; it was a divine act of solidarity with the broken. He carried the weight of injustice, not only to redeem us, but to show us how to stand with the wounded. Henri Nouwen reminds us, “The main question is not ‘How can we hide our wounds?’ but ‘How can we put our woundedness in the service of others?’”

As the church, we must not build walls of purity and performance. Instead, we must open our arms to those our society rejects: The Dalit, the widow, the orphan, the abused woman, the mentally ill, and the struggling young. Their wounds are Christ’s wounds. When we embrace their pain, we participate in God’s redemptive work.

Move from maintenance to mission: the church as a public witness

M.M. Thomas boldly states, “The church is not a refuge from the world but the servant of the world.” The resurrection did not create an institution; it birthed a movement committed to justice, healing, and restoration. Today’s church is

challenged to move beyond protecting traditions toward incarnating Christ's love in real, transformative ways.

Being a church of the wounded healer means creating communities where healing is not a distant hope but a daily reality. This includes becoming safe spaces for truth-telling, justice-seeking, and boundary-breaking love. It means not only preaching the Gospel, but becoming it in action. True righteousness is not shown in rituals, but in relationships healed and lives restored.

Prayer

Wounded Saviour, You bore our brokenness so we may live in wholeness. Teach us to be a church that walks with the hurting, speaks for the silenced, and heals through Your love. Shape us into vessels of hope and justice in this wounded world. Amen.



20 September Gender

Rev. Samuel Mall

Holding gender in balance

“Some Sadducees, those who say there is no resurrection, came to him... Indeed, they cannot die anymore, because they are like angels and are children of God, being children of the resurrection.” (Luke 20:27-36)

The world in which Jesus ministered was male-dominated, and the text represents this culture as the Sadducees question Jesus on resurrection. Dialogue here is concerned with marriage, death, and offspring. Jesus worked in a culture where the house was a decisive point of reference for a woman's life. Women found fulfilment in the company of children and other women. As for men, the public sphere was reserved for them and, in the private sphere, they were the lords of the house.

This privileged status of men is attested by the controversy regarding marriage, which was based on the practice of levirate marriage found in Deut. 25:5. Here, brothers who reside together, and if one of them dies and has no son, his wife shall not be married outside the family; her husband's brother will take her in marriage.

Women had no choice, even in their homes. A woman was a provision to ensure posterity for a man who died without having children. A woman without a man was without status, without social security, and without identity. The order of the house was a structure of subordination, exercising control and creating silence.

In that world marked by patriarchal oppression, Jesus was sensitive towards the social and religious handicaps with which women had to struggle. The question posed by the Sadducees was aimed at undermining Christ's influence among the multitude, as for a rabbi to be seen speaking to women in public was an end to his reputation.

The question on resurrection in the text was based on the materialistic view of resurrection, and He shows that the question is futile by standing with the woman. Jesus rejected the example of levirate marriage and pointed out that in the resurrected life, immortality was more essential than sexuality. The need for marriage ceases when resurrection is promised, implying that a woman no longer belongs to any man.

As a result, Jesus' reply broke the tradition by affirming her worth in society by pointing out that participation in future life is no longer dependent on procreation; as a result, patriarchal intentions in marriage can be abandoned.

The story of Jesus is inspiring in our quest for gender equality. He was on the side of women, where they were a sign of weakness. Jesus showed favour, love, and respect for women and raised women above the condition of mere slaves. He certainly broke his tradition and tried to reform it for the benefit of all.

Our present responsibility is to denounce every subordinating structure. There is a need for us to live a resurrected life, a life which is resurrected from the discriminating structures of society. We have as our role model in Jesus who dared to be himself and overcame the patriarchal compulsion of his context.

Prayer

In a patriarchal society, the feminist challenge for us is a radical one; it poses in front of us questions that are existential and ethical. Through the example of Jesus Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit, may we overcome patriarchy and all life-negating relationships. Amen.



27 September Community
Harley Jack Stapleton Brister

Radical belonging

“For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. For in the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.” (1 Corinthians 12:12-13)

I live in the UK, a context where political and societal fracturation is reaching a point which feels intractable, and has led to the rise of violent, radical political groups, such as the English Defence League. But how does my country get out of this mess? Is our current situation linked to a fall in church attendance and community-based culture?

In the scriptural passage we are exhorted to look upon ourselves as “one body” in Christ. It’s a passage on which many ministers have preached, but perhaps it rings hollow with modern, Western people on a deep level, including within the church, unfortunately. Many in the United Kingdom are calling for a society where real community is valued against growing fracturation and radicalisation, but I am afraid many people, particularly cosmopolitan folks like myself, have forgotten that real community can only come with some level of personal sacrifice. Volunteering, and being involved in church life, could represent a solution to our ills, but people are good at creating excuses not to take humbling forms of action.

The UK’s current universal standard is not to have a universal, but should we be seeking a kind of universal which holds and respects differences, in our different cultures, ethnicities, opinions, and in other forms of difference, whilst not being an enforced standard, but being motivated by some deeper potential within us? You might call it the Holy Spirit, you might call it “geist,” or you might just call it community spirit, but whatever you want to call it, it increasingly feels missing in our world, and in Western society in particular.

When I offer the solutions of church attendance, or of volunteering with marginalized communities to people I know, I usually hear the same sort of concerns: “I’m afraid, I’ve not volunteered before,” to which I might respond, “Don’t worry! People are really supportive and willing to help new people.” Or I might be told: “How do I know that this church isn’t weird?” to which I might respond, “There are plenty of churches out there which are not weird; I could give you a list.”

Someone might say: “Well it’s not really me,” but no community space fully represents everything inside of us, and that is precisely what it means to be in community, and that’s the really important point, I think.

The Western world wants community without sacrifice, and parts of it want a more communal society but without the personal need to render acts of service or respect, such as one sees commonly in many Asian and African contexts. Politics should not just be about ideas, but about the actions we take on a regular basis.

We must create a new kind of church in the UK to respond to growing fracturation, violence, and discrimination, where harmony might be found by reconnecting with the church and community-based culture, and by humbling ourselves enough to be a unique and beloved member of one body.

Prayer

Lord, thank you for showing us a new kind of community according to life in your word. We pray for every country where people are marginalized by growing violence, and we pray for a social maturation into the fullness of your image. Amen.

OCTO



OBER





4 October Biblical love
Lalramdinthara

Agape, Philia, Eros, Storge

“For the whole law is summed up in a single commandment, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’” (Galatians 5:14)

In Matthew 22:37-40, Jesus speaks to religious leaders who were trying to trick Him with difficult questions. They ask which commandment was the most important, and Jesus answers with love—love for God and love for others. This is a simple but powerful way to explain the heart of God’s law.

In Galatians 5:14, Paul writes to a church that is struggling with division. They are fighting about what rules they should follow. Paul tells them that the most important rule is to love others. By doing this, they would fulfil God’s law.

Both of these scriptures were written in times when the Roman Empire was in power. People were oppressed and had to deal with unfair laws. In this context, Jesus and Paul’s message of love was not just about feelings—it was about action, especially in a world of oppression.

Today, our world is still marked by deep suffering—hunger, poverty, war, and the marginalization of countless communities. Around the globe, wars continue to rage, displacing families, destroying cities, and taking innocent lives. Marginalized groups—whether because of race, gender, religion, disability, or economic status—are still pushed to the edges of society, often unheard and unseen.

In this world, the command to love God and love others is more than a comforting idea—it is a call to action. Just as Jesus and Paul spoke these words during a time of Roman oppression and injustice, their message today invites us to respond to suffering with compassion, courage, and concrete acts of love. Love is not passive. It is feeding the hungry, defending the oppressed, welcoming the stranger, and standing up for those who are silenced. It is refusing to turn away from the pain of the world, even when it is easier to do so.

When we love in this way, we fulfill the heart of God's law—not through rituals or rigid rule-keeping, but by embodying justice, mercy, and humility. In times of global crisis, love becomes a form of resistance against hate, greed, and indifference. It transforms communities, builds peace, and offers hope. Jesus' and Paul's message is as urgent now as it was then: if we truly love, we will act. And in acting, we become part of God's healing work in the world.

Prayer

God of justice and compassion,
Open our eyes to the suffering around us.
Teach us to love not just with words, but with action. Give us courage to stand
with the oppressed,
To care for the hurting,
And to be your hands and feet in a world in need. May our love reflect Your love—
Bold, selfless, and full of grace. Amen.



11 October Gender-based violence

Themba Ngwira

Breaking the chains of violence

*“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)*

Gender-based violence has been called South Africa’s “second pandemic.” Every day, women, children, and vulnerable people suffer at the hands of those who abuse power and use violence instead of love. Families are broken, fear fills our communities, and lives are lost. As followers of Christ, we cannot remain silent in the face of such suffering.

The prophet Micah reminds us of what God truly desires from His people: justice, mercy, and humility. Justice means standing against systems, attitudes, and actions that harm others. Mercy means showing compassion and protecting the vulnerable. Humility means recognizing that our power comes from God, not from controlling or dominating others.

Violence grows when people misuse power. But the gospel calls us to a different way: the way of love and respect. Jesus Himself treated women with dignity in a culture that often marginalized them. He protected the vulnerable, lifted up the broken, and confronted those who abused their authority. His example challenges us to do the same.

As the church, we are called to be a voice for the voiceless. That means educating young men and women about respect, speaking out against harmful behaviors, supporting survivors of abuse, and creating safe spaces where healing can begin. It also means praying intentionally for God to transform hearts, because lasting change begins from within.

We cannot allow gender-based violence to be normalized. Each act of love, respect, and courage breaks the chains of fear and violence. When we choose to honour one another as image-bearers of God, we push back against the darkness with the light of Christ.

Micah's words are a call to action for every believer and nonbeliever, not just in South Africa but around the world: act justly, love mercy, walk humbly. If we live this out daily, we will become part of God's healing work in our land.

Prayer

Lord, we cry out for our nation, especially for the women, children, and vulnerable people who suffer from gender-based violence. Heal their wounds, comfort their hearts, and restore their dignity. Change the hearts of those who harm others and teach us to be people of justice, mercy, and humility. Give us courage to speak out against violence and wisdom to build a culture of respect and love for one another. May South Africa be a land where every person is safe and valued. In Jesus' name, Amen.



18 October From the margins
Jayden Bosworth Ewen

Prophets of the margin

“There was also a prophet, Anna the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was of a great age, having lived with her husband seven years after her marriage, then as a widow to the age of eighty-four. She never left the temple but worshiped there with fasting and prayer night and day. At that moment she came and began to praise God and to speak about the child to all who were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem.” (Luke 2:36-38)

Luke 2 briefly introduces us to a profound woman who leaves us with much to think about it. Anna, a prophetess, lived in a context where status, age, and gender defined one's worth. Being elderly, female, and widowed, Anna met none of the prerequisites to be among the powerful.

In a world that measures worth by visibility and power, Anna's life tells another story. Anna remained faithful. To the world, she's forgotten, but in God's mission, she is found. The world failed to see the wealth in her waiting and worship, but God did. Her story, though brief, is a perfect revelation that the margins are not places of absence but sacred places where God's glory is also manifested.

For many of us, we have felt, or have been made to feel, like Anna. We may have felt unheard, unseen, undervalued and unloved. Sometimes our faithfulness may have gone unnoticed, and our waiting has gone on forever. Seeing ourselves in Anna means recognising that mission can also lie in the waiting. Faithfulness in obscurity is still ministry. Her story invites us to value prayer, presence, and perseverance as powerful acts of witness. When we feel on the edges, Anna teaches us that we can still encounter God deeply and become bearers of hope to others.

But we are not always the Annas of today. In those moments, what then should be our response? To show up for people like Anna is to honour the wisdom of the overlooked. It means creating space in our churches, communities, and circles for the quiet voices to be seen, heard, and celebrated. In your context this might be the widowed, disabled, elderly, women, children, poor, etc.

It's also a call for us to shift how we define and value ministries, missions, and stewards in the Kingdom. Instead of only celebrating those in visible roles, we learn to recognise the prophets who pray in silence, the intercessors who hold communities together, and the faithful who serve behind the scenes.

Mission from the margins invites us not to rescue people like Anna, but to stand beside them, to listen, to learn, and to be transformed by their stories and faith. Anna's life is a quiet revolution. She redefines mission as presence, faith as endurance, and prophecy as testimony born from patience. When we open our eyes to see the Annas among us, and the Anna within us, we begin to see how God's mission is always unfolding on the margins.

Prayer

Gracious God, thank You for seeing those the world overlooks. Like Anna, teach us to find You in seasons of waiting and to serve faithfully even in obscurity. When we feel unseen, remind us that You dwell with those on the margins. Open our eyes to the quiet prophets among us such as the elderly, the poor, the abused, the forgotten. Help us to honour their witness, to learn from their endurance, and to stand beside them in love. May our lives reflect the same hope and devotion that filled Anna's heart as she waited for her Messiah. Amen.



25 October Decolonising the temporal
Priscillah Bwalya

Submitting to the greater good

*“The same way, you who are younger must accept the authority of the elders. And all of you must clothe yourselves with humility in your dealings with one another, for God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble. Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, so that he may exalt you in due time.”
(1 Peter 5:5-6)*

In a world that often celebrates individualism and self-promotion, the concept of submitting to the greater good can seem counterintuitive. However, as Christians, we are called to a different standard—one that prioritises humanity, community, and the needs of others. The scripture 1 Peter 5:6 reminds us to humble ourselves, under the mighty hand of God, so that he may exalt us in due time. This verse challenges us to rethink our approach to life and relationships, inviting us to surrender our will to God’s greater plan.

Submitting to the greater good means acknowledging that God’s plan is more expansive and wise than our own. It’s about trusting that He knows what’s best for us, even if the path ahead seems uncertain or difficult. This trust is not about losing our identity but about recognizing that we are part of a larger community. Our actions have an impact on those around us, and when we prioritise the greater good, we contribute to a more harmonious and loving environment.

Humility invites us into a different rhythm. In God’s kingdom, time is not measured in profit but in grace. Seasons of waiting are not wasted, for they are shaping us beneath the surface. Moments of obscurity are not failures, but opportunities for deeper rooting in Christ. When we humble ourselves under God’s timing, we participate in a greater good that transcends personal ambition or cultural demand.

Decolonising the temporal also calls us into community. Time in the kingdom of God is not individualistic but shared; Peter reminds us that, in practicing humility

in our dealings with one another, our priorities must make space for others, especially those pushed aside by systems of exploitations. Submitting our time to the greater good means slowing down enough to see our neighbor, to listen, to care, to walk together rather than racing ahead alone.

In a world that is increasingly self focused, humility is a counter-cultural virtue. It's a reminder that we are not alone and that we are part of a larger community. When we humble ourselves, we are able to serve others more effectively.

As we reflect on our lives, we may realise that we have been holding onto pride and self-sufficiency. We may realise that we have been trying to control everything but the truth is that we can't control everything. When we humble ourselves under God's might, we can trust him to guide us. So we clothe ourselves with humility not as weakness, but as alignment. We bend our temporal rhythms to God's eternal purposes.

Prayer

Our Heavenly Father, helps us to humble ourselves; free us from the pride that seeks to master time. Teach us to walk in your timing, patience to wait upon your hand, and love to share our days with others. May our submission to your timing reveal the greater good of your kingdom. Amen.

NOVE



MBER





1 November Migrant-friendly church
Rev. YuFen Chen

The rock and the spring: ministry in London's living crossroads

*"He alone is my rock and my salvation, my fortress; I shall never be shaken."
(Psalm 62:2)*

"Surely God is my salvation; I will trust, and will not be afraid, for the LORD GOD is my strength and my might; he has become my salvation. With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation." (Isaiah 12:2–3)

When I began ministry in London, I often felt as though I was walking on shifting ground. The city never stops moving: streams of migrants, international students, asylum seekers, tourists, and long-established communities constantly overlap and intersect.

Our Taiwanese fellowship gathered in fragile numbers, sometimes only a handful after the pandemic. Yet even in that small circle, Christ revealed himself as both rock and spring—a sure foundation and a living source of renewal.

The rock: stability in a fragmented world

London is marked by constant change. Students come for a few years, then move on. Immigrants shift between unstable jobs. Churches close or merge under financial strain. In such a landscape, the confession of the psalmist rings true: "He alone is my rock and my salvation, my fortress; I shall never be shaken."

I remember one young Taiwanese student who joined our Bible study. She carried loneliness, academic pressure, and questions about identity. For her, Scripture became the one fixed point in a life of uncertainty. Our ministry could not promise permanent belonging in a transient city, but it could point her to the foundation that never shifts.

This "rock" dimension of ministry often means cultivating stability: regular worship, familiar hymns, and prayers that connect us with the communion of faithful clouds of witnesses across time and space. In a fellowship where faces change constantly, the rhythm of worship becomes an anchor.

The spring: flowing beyond borders

At the same time, the Christian life is not only about stability but also about growth and movement. Isaiah's promise resounds: "With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation." For us in London, this has meant embracing the city's diversity. We are not only Taiwanese; we are part of a mosaic that includes Hong Kongers, mainland Chinese, Africans, Europeans, and British Christians. When we partnered with a local church for services and charity work, we discovered the Spirit calling us beyond our linguistic and cultural comfort zones.

Like a spring, faith refuses to stay confined. It pushes through barriers, finds new paths, and gives life in unexpected places. Our fellowship has tried creative ministries—badminton clubs, cultural festivals, art-based retreats—that welcomed those who might never join a Sunday service. These were not distractions but extensions of the living water Christ offered to the Samaritan woman.

Holding rock and spring together

Ministry requires both. If we focus only on the rock, we risk rigidity, clinging to tradition without growth. If we focus only on the spring, we risk shallowness, chasing novelty without depth. In London, we have learned to hold the two together: stability and renewal, foundation and flow.

Working with the legacy of Dr James Laidlaw Maxwell, the first Presbyterian missionary doctor to Taiwan, reminds us of this balance. His story grounds us in a long history of witness—the rock—but it also challenges us to cross new frontiers today—digital platforms, intercultural dialogue, ecological justice—the spring.

Gratitude and grievance

Ministry in London is marked by both gratitude and struggle. We are grateful for the solidarity of Taiwanese churches during the pandemic and for British congregations that opened their halls to us. Yet we also carry the burdens of migrants' isolation, students' anxieties, and the misunderstandings of cross-cultural encounters.

These tensions are not signs of failure but signs of participation in Christ's journey. He is our rock, keeping us from being shaken. He is also our spring, sending us out with joy to draw water from the wells of salvation.

Prayer

Rock of our salvation and spring of living water, anchor us when the ground beneath us shakes, and renew us when our spirits grow weary. Teach us to hold stability and renewal together, that we may serve with gratitude and hope, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.



8 November Faithful loyalty
Ominell Boyce

Cultivating trust in the unseen hand

"But Ruth said, 'Do not press me to leave you, to turn back from following you! Where you go, I will go; where you lodge, I will lodge; your people shall be my people and your God my God. Where you die, I will die, and there will I be buried. May the Lord do thus to me, and more as well, if even death parts me from you!'"
(Ruth 1:16-17)

The story of Ruth is a timeless account of loyalty, faith, and redemption. It begins in a time of hardship, with famine driving Naomi and her family to Moab. Tragedy strikes, leaving Naomi widowed and bereft of her sons. In her grief, she makes the difficult decision to return to her homeland, Judah. She urges her daughters-in-law, Orpah and Ruth, to return to their own people, hoping they might find new lives and husbands. Ruth's response is one of the most moving and powerful covenants of loyalty.

In a time where our world feels fictional and self-centered, the story of Ruth challenges us to ask ourselves "how rooted am I to trust God's unseen hand even when life feels uncertain?" Ruth's words, "*Where you go I will go, and where you stay I will stay. Your people will be my people and your God my God,*" are a testament to her unwavering commitment to Naomi.

Think of a time when someone's loyalty carried you through. Ruth's loyalty transforms lives; it reminds us that we are not alone in our struggles, for the hand of God is with us. This was not just a matter of familial obligation; it was a profound spiritual decision. It was not a declaration; it was a covenant.

Ruth, a Moabite woman, was choosing to leave her own people, her own gods, and her own future to embrace the God of Israel and to care for her mother-in-law

Naomi. This act of devotion highlights the transformative power of faith and the importance of choosing to love and support others, even in the face of adversity.

Naomi believes that the hand of God had gone out against her so she returned home and changed her name. We know in many cultures, including in scripture, a person's name has significance. There are people in society who are unbothered and others who are deliberate in their efforts to fight injustice, crime, and corruption. We know of the marginalised who are challenged to question who they are and to change their identity. How can they cultivate trust in the unseeing hands?

Ruth's journey is a powerful reminder that true faith often requires us to step outside of our comfort zones and to embrace the unknown. It calls us to be loyal, not just in words, but in actions, to those around us. As our people lament, are we willing to be like Ruth—bringing hope, showing how God can use our faithfulness to bring about unexpected blessings?

The question of how deeply rooted one's trust is in God's unseen hand, particularly when facing the unknown, is a profound one. It delves into the core of faith, requiring a willingness to step away from the comfort of the familiar and embrace the uncertainty that life often presents. This exploration necessitates examining the nature of trust, the role of uncertainty, and how faith can flourish in the face of the unknown.

Prayer

Lord, help us to be as faithful as Ruth, to show unwavering loyalty to those around us, to cultivate trust in the works of your unseen hands, and to trust in your provision, even when the path ahead is uncertain. Amen.



15 November Radical love
Patricia Coulbourn White

Loving your neighbour

“You shall love your neighbour as yourself.” (Matthew 22:39)

When Jesus was asked to name the greatest commandment, He gave two: Love God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength, and love your neighbor as yourself. What stands out is that Jesus didn't separate the two. Our love for God is not just about private devotion—it's expressed in how we love others, particularly our neighbours.

But who is our neighbour? In Luke 10, Jesus shares the Parable of the Good Samaritan. He shows that a neighbour is not limited to those who look like us, think like us, or live next door. A neighbour is anyone in need, anyone we encounter, especially those we might be tempted to avoid or overlook. The Samaritan, a cultural outsider, crosses boundaries to care for a man beaten and left on the road. This is a radical love that goes beyond comfort zones, calling us to see every person as someone worthy of care and compassion.

Loving our neighbour is more than being polite. It's being present, even in the messiness of life. It means setting aside our preferences, pride, and convenience to serve, forgive, and encourage. Love is more than an emotion; it's a tangible action. It's a matter of giving time, offering prayer, and sharing resources without expecting anything in return. Indeed, Jesus' love for us cost Him everything.

In 1 John 4:20, the apostle John says: *“Those who say: ‘I love God,’ and hate their brothers or sisters, are liars; for those who do not love a brother or sister whom they have seen, cannot love God whom they have not seen.”* This challenge shows us that love for God and love for others cannot be separated. Our love for God is evidenced by how we love those around us. It's impossible to truly love God, whom we can't see, if we refuse to love the people we can see.

Jesus' command to love goes beyond individual relationships; it has a societal dimension. Loving our neighbour means advocating for justice, standing up for the marginalised, and working toward a society that reflects God's kingdom values. As Paul writes in Galatians 5:14, *"For the whole law is summed up in a single commandment, 'You shall love your neighbour as yourself.'"*

This love is not passive. It demands action. It calls us to work to ensure that all people are treated with dignity and respect. Love on a societal scale is about creating a community where people are seen, heard, and valued.

Loving our neighbour is a radical act in a world that often divides and isolates. It challenges us to step outside our comfort zones, to love those who are different, those who challenge us, and even those we might consider our enemies. This kind of love is countercultural, yet it is exactly what Jesus modeled for us.

Loving our neighbour isn't just a command; it's a privilege. It's an invitation to join God in His redemptive work. Loving your neighbour changes everything. It transforms hearts, communities, and even the world.

Prayer

Lord Jesus, thank You for showing us what it means to love. Help me to see others the way You see them. Open my heart to be compassionate, my hands to be generous, and my life to be a testimony of Your love. Teach me to love my neighbour—not just with my words, but with my actions. Amen.



22 November Political instability and the church

Dr Collin Waterman

The church is a witness of peace

“He changes times and seasons, deposes kings and sets up kings; he gives wisdom to the wise and knowledge to those who have understanding.” (Daniel 2:21)

In the words of Guyanese poet Martin Carter, “This is a dark time, my love,” I pause to reflect on the current global issue of political instability. We are indeed living in dark and uncertain times. We often feel as though the future is unpredictable. Governments are shaken.

Economies tremble. Violence, division, and fear are spreading across many nations. As human beings, we crave stability and predictability, but these experiences bring anxiety, confusion, or fear. In such times, a pressing question arises: What is the church’s role during political instability? With these few words, my objective is to anchor you in Scripture, align your hearts with God’s will, and remind you of the church’s prophetic role in a troubled world.

Brothers and sisters, it is comforting to know that God remains sovereign over all governments. Daniel 2:21 reminds us that, *“He changes times and seasons; He deposes kings and raise up others.”* Romans 13:1 also remind us, *“Let everyone be subject to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established.”*

Despite the current situation in our political systems, God is not surprised. He sets up leaders, and He brings them down. He is never out of control, even when the world seems to be.

Brothers and sisters, while God remains sovereign, as His people we must continue to be that prophetic voice, to be a voice for the voiceless, and to speak up despite persecution, as suffering for one’s faith is a promised part of the Christian journey and can lead to a greater reward in heaven.

The Apostle Peter reminded us in 1 Peter 3: 13-17, *“And who is he who will harm you if you become followers of what is good? But even if you should suffer for righteousness’ sake, you are blessed. “And do not be afraid of their threats, nor be troubled.” But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear; having a good conscience, that when they defame you as evildoers, those who revile your good conduct in Christ may be ashamed. For it is better, if it is the will of God, to suffer for doing good than for doing evil.”*

The church cannot remain silent in the face of injustice. Just as prophets spoke boldly to kings and nations, we are called to declare righteousness, challenge oppression, and stand with the poor and marginalised. We must not be politically neutral, but biblically faithful.

Brothers and sisters, while we are called to speak for the voiceless, we are equally called to bear witness to peace in the midst of chaos. True peace doesn't come from circumstances, but a deep relationship with Christ.

During His journey on earth, Christ reminds us in John 14:27, *"Peace I leave with you... Do not let your hearts be troubled."* The Apostle Paul in his letter to the Philippians stated *"The peace of God... will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus."* (Philippians 4:7)

While the world may respond with fear or violence, the church is called to be a witness of peace. When others panic, we pray. When others divide, we unite in Christ. When others curse, we bless.

Brothers and sisters, being peaceful in the midst of chaos show the world where our hope and ultimate allegiance lies. As a child of God, we pledge our loyalty and obedience to His reign, above all earthly powers, politics, or personal desires. It is not just believing in God's Kingdom, but actively living under its rule. Philippians 3:20 reminds us that *"Our citizenship is in heaven."*

Acts 5:9 also states that *"We must obey God rather than men."* While we participate in politics, we must not be defined by it. Our ultimate allegiance is not to a party or president, but to King Jesus. We don't put our trust in elections, but in the eternal throne of God.

In times of political instability, brothers and sisters, we must remember to rise:

- In faith, not fear
- In truth, not compromise
- In love, not division.

Prayer

Heavenly Father, we come to you in these uncertain times, knowing that you are the same yesterday, today, and forever. We remain confident that you will not give us more than we can bear. When nations shake and leaders fail, you remain seated on the throne. Lord, empower your church to rise with boldness, to speak with wisdom, and to walk in love.

Teach us to be peacemakers, justice seekers, and faithful witnesses. Help us never forget that our hope is not in man, but in you alone. Protect your people. Strengthen the persecuted. Revive the sleeping church. Let Your Kingdom come and your will be done on earth, as it is in heaven. In Jesus' mighty name we pray, Amen.



29 November First Sunday of Advent
Rt Rev. Daniel Chance

Spiritual preparation

"From His fullness we have all received, grace upon grace. The law indeed was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ." (John 1:16-17)

The pervading circumstances of the day reflected that something had definitely gone wrong in the lives of God's people. Sin had engulfed the hearts of many. Light was being threatened by the power of darkness. The moral fabric of the society was deteriorating. In fact, the very soul of God's people was becoming dull to His presence and power, which was at work within and around them. Even those who had been appointed to lead, care for, and instruct God's people in the way of righteousness had lost their sense of direction. Their spiritual compass for life and living seemed to have malfunctioned. Greed and self-centeredness now occupied the hearts of many. In light of this, God had seen and heard enough. Being the loving and caring God that He is, He reached out to protect and offer security to His people as only God can. It was against this backdrop or background, that God intervened to save, rescue, and redeem His own.

St John 1:16-17

"From His fullness we have all received, grace upon grace. The law indeed was given through Moses, grace and truth came through Jesus Christ."

God, in demonstrating His loving kindness and tender mercy, or in other words, by revealing His unmerited favour toward sinful humanity, reached out and continues to reach out even today with the view to save and reclaim those who belong to Him. In this season of Advent, a time of spiritual preparation, these words of hope must resonate within our hearts and so be reflected in our daily life. The clarion call enunciated by the prophets and John the Baptist, remains relevant and applicable to our time and context. This call for repentance and spiritual re-awakening, must be echoed wherever the church exists in the world. Light must dispel the darkness that is present within us. Hope must invade those places where there may be discouragement, despair, grief, and loneliness.

As we embrace another Advent season, we must admit that the signs are all visible. Signs which indicate that the quality or standard of human life has deteriorated. This therefore encourages the believer to use this opportunity which has been given to us, to share with others the grace and truth, which are ours in Christ. How fitting are the words of the Prophet Isaiah, who said, *"A voice cries out: In the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord, make His paths straight."* (Isaiah 40:3) Are we willing to avail ourselves to all that is offered to us, through Christ who came into the world to redeem humanity?

Prayer

Gracious God, loving Father, we approach Your throne of grace, mercy, and truth, as we are. We seek Your guidance and blessings upon our lives. In this season of repentance, spiritual preparation and renewal, we confess that we have often allowed the power of darkness to infiltrate the parts of our lives that should be reserved for Your Holy Spirit. In spite of the wrongs done and mistakes made, we seek your forgiveness and pray for restoration. In Christ's name we pray. Amen.

DECE



MBER





6 December

Rev. Ninan Jacob

A celebration of accepting and being accepted

“When Elizabeth heard Mary’s greeting, the child leaped in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit.” (Luke 1: 39-45)

The season of Advent is a thrilling and cherished time, echoing generous and heartening messages.

The experience of “God became human,” as told in the Scripture, is a truth so profound it’s beyond simple explanation. During this season, we remember the events surrounding the Lord’s coming long ago, we celebrate His presence with us today, and we look forward to His final coming in glory. It is a time filled with joy and celebration, a spirit shared by many festivals around the world.

In this context, let’s reflect on the joy behind the meeting of Mary and Elizabeth, described in Luke 1:39–45.

A meeting of two women

The *Gospel of Luke* consistently shows that its characters – even the seemingly insignificant ones – are received with care. For instance, the infant Jesus was received by Simeon and Anna (2:25–38), the man attacked by robbers was received by the Good Samaritan (10:29–37), and the Prodigal Son was received by his loving father (15:11–24). Likewise, Mary, a young woman, was warmly received by Elizabeth, an older woman rich in life experience.

The depth of the celebration and delight in this passage is profound. Luke’s account highlights that Mary was from the plains near Jerusalem, while Elizabeth lived in the hilly and dangerous area of Judea. It was truly a meeting of two different regions and cultures, yet they had a common gift from God to share. Mary’s journey was undoubtedly difficult, but Elizabeth’s warm reception eased her struggles. They were two ordinary women who became extraordinary through

their dependability, hospitality, and shared, caring mindset. This made their celebration truly genuine.

Obedience and true discipleship

The remarkable obedience of both Mary and Elizabeth was another key factor in their celebration. Elizabeth, an aged woman, humbly accepted God's will to become the mother of the one who would prepare the way for the Saviour. Similarly, Mary, a young girl, accepted God's will to be the mother of the Saviour. Though they represented two different generations, both were elevated to a state of true discipleship, becoming channels of God's glory and examples for us all. Their meeting, therefore, is a celebration of joy in the spirit of true discipleship.

In the lives of these two simple women, a series of impossibilities became possible. Elizabeth was old and childless, with fertility being an impossibility in her life. Mary was young and a virgin, making pregnancy seemingly impossible.

Yet, when they met, they shared a message of possibility—the possibility of a new life in the midst of every impossibility. The song of Mary, known as the Magnificat, beautifully reveals the mighty power and justice of God.

The meeting of Mary and Elizabeth is a celebration of unity, hope, and sincere acceptance, both in receiving and being received. It is also an unending celebration of the mighty power of God, who generates potential in the midst of every impossibility and ability in the midst of every inability.

In their lives, we see the celebration of two generations united in their obedience. As we reflect on their story, let us be inspired to receive others with that same joyful spirit. By highlighting the possibilities prepared by God in our own lives, we can be true disciples and truly celebrate the life of Christ.

Prayer

Loving God, help to celebrate the joy of Advent by receiving each other in Christ and prepare us for a genuine discipleship. Amen.



13 December Women in Leadership

Rev. Dr Jane Kaluba

Changing the narrative

“Now as they went on their way, he entered a certain village where a woman named Martha welcomed him. She had a sister named Mary, who sat at Jesus’ feet and listened to what he was saying. But Martha was distracted by her many tasks, so she came to him and asked, ‘Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to do all the work by myself? Tell her, then, to help me.’ But the Lord answered her, ‘Martha, Martha, you are worried and distracted by many things,’” (Luke 10:38-41)

Celebrating women and seeing their value is something that is done worldwide but little is done when it comes to inviting women to the table as equal partners when it comes to leadership.

Women leaders often all over the world are good at prioritising, and creating inclusive and supportive work environments wherever they are found. The insights to see that everyone is cared for are a true virtue that God has embedded in their DNA. This commitment to fostering a positive workplace culture is particularly crucial for women in the church, who often face unique challenges and biases.

By creating an environment where women feel valued, respected, and empowered, the church can promote higher job satisfaction and retention rates among its female staff and volunteers. Research has consistently shown that when employees, especially women, feel supported and appreciated, they are more likely to remain engaged, committed, and dedicated to the organisation, ultimately contributing to a more vibrant and effective ministry.

In Luke 10:38-42, Jesus was a regular guest in the home shared by Lazarus, Mary, and Martha. Scripture records two occasions where He ate a meal prepared for Him in their house (Luke 10:38-41). The story of Martha and Mary highlights two different approaches to hosting Jesus. While Martha is busy with preparations, Mary chooses to sit at Jesus’ feet and listen to him. Jesus gently rebukes

her, emphasising that while service is important, spending time in God's presence and listening to his word is of greater value than service.

This story encourages women to prioritise learning and spiritual growth, rather than just focussing on practical tasks. By sitting at Jesus' feet, Mary is empowered with knowledge and intimacy with Him; women can follow her example by prioritizing their spiritual development.

The United Church of Zambia has one of the biggest numbers of female ministers and they are doing a great job in their various congregations. At the last day of a retreat held in June, Holy Communion was conducted, and there was one woman among the 10 male bishops invited to conduct communion. I noticed that those who carried dishes and clothes at the end of procession were two young female ministers who have not served long in the church. Women in church are always given roles that define them as women.

Empowering women in the church requires a multifaceted approach. To start, women can focus on acquiring knowledge and skills through continuous learning, enabling them to take on leadership roles and challenge existing norms. Additionally, women can reclaim their narrative by rejecting stereotypes and biases that limit their potential. By pursuing higher education and leadership aspirations, women can drive systemic change and advocate for greater representation in all areas of church leadership, ultimately creating a more inclusive and equitable environment for future generations.

Prayer

Lord you designed us to have a voice at the table where we are loved. We ask you to change our narrative and learn from you at your feet as empowered women of God, in Jesus' name. Amen.



20 December Christmas (25 Dec)

Rev. Anna Jane Evans

The message of Christmas

“... and Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart. The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, just as it had been told them.” (Luke 2:19-20)

It's always a joke here in Wales that Christmas things appear in the shops immediately after Halloween. I find myself today – at the beginning of October 2025 – sitting down to write a meditation for Christmas Day 2026. What will the world be like by then, I wonder to myself – and hope deeply that we will be in a better place – with the people of Gaza, Sudan, Ukraine – and everywhere else rebuilding their lives after the destruction and horror of wars and natural disasters. If that is to be the case, we've got a lot of work to do in the meantime!

But it was to Herod's world of domination and oppression that Jesus came – so whatever the geopolitical situation in December 2026 – the message of Christmas is timeless and its beauty and mystery is that it still provides hope and joy and praise throughout the world as we read this meditation! The great mistake we often make in our Sunday School Christmas nativity scripts is to omit Herod (probably because we don't want to offend the parents of whoever may be chosen to play the kingly character!) - but without Herod the Christmas narrative is in danger of becoming a sentimental and sanitised fairytale.

The whole point is that Jesus came to challenge and to change Herod's world – the baby in the room always grabs our attention and childbirth is always a miracle!

The shepherds are among my favourite Christmas characters – their simplicity of faith – moving so quickly from terror to joy as they respond actively and immediately to the call of the angels – *let us go **now** to Bethlehem* – and find the child lying in the manger. They root the gospel among the poor and marginalised – they remind us that Jesus wasn't born with a silver spoon in his mouth in a palace. They make us stop and ask ourselves: Where is he born today? Where should we

go to look? Is it enough to sit in a church singing joyful carols and praising God – with a doll in a clean manger smiling at us?

The miracle of Christmas is still inviting us to look in the back streets, the refugee camps, and dark alleys of our world. That is where we will find the light that *shines in the darkness and the darkness did not overcome it*.

Whatever the world is like in 2026 – wherever you are reading this – the mystery and joy of that first Christmas is a message to be pondered and treasured in our hearts – and to be proclaimed and shared so that others may hear and see and respond.

Prayer

In the silence of our homes, in the sanctity of our churches, in the depths of our heart, speak your peace to us today and let your love shine.

In the danger of the back streets, in the loneliness and squalor of a refugee camp, in the uncertainty of the squat, speak your peace to us today and let your love shine.

And in our lives – and in our living may your joy and love shine and witness to your kingdom here on earth as it is in heaven. Amen.



27 December Year-End

Rev. Dr Sangdo Choi

God's choices are higher than ours

"Seek the Lord while he may be found; call upon him while he is near; let the wicked forsake their way and the unrighteous their thoughts; let them return to the Lord, that he may have mercy on them, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon. For my thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways my ways, says the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts." (Isaiah 55.6-9)

One often hears the rather pithy observation, "Between B and D lies C." Applied to the very substance of our existence, this simply means that **choice** reposes between **birth** and **death**. Indeed, every fleeting moment of life is, at its core, an act of selection.

Daily, we must determine our attire, our sustenance; there is scarcely a moment that does not present a bifurcation. Life, therefore, is a ceaseless procession of such decisions.

Consider the foundational narratives: **Abraham** was required to adjudicate between Haran and the land divinely commanded; **Jacob** chose to appropriate the birthright blessing; and **Joseph** exercised supreme resolve to withstand the enticements of Potiphar's wife. The Israelites themselves faced the ultimate dichotomy: **Yahweh** or **Baal**, **Egypt** or **Canaan**.

Daniel had to choose between the king's rich fare and a simple, more principled diet. Even the **Prodigal Son** first elected to depart with his inheritance, yet later, in destitution, made the crucial choice to return to his father's hearth. And, most profoundly, **Jesus Christ** prayed, "If it is possible, let this cup pass from me," yet chose to endure the Passion, concluding, "Not my will, but Yours be done."

At this end of the year, we, too, stand perpetually before such determinations, and this past year has witnessed a veritable multitude of our own choices. It is our sincerest hope that these selections have been sound ones. Called by the

Almighty, we have endeavoured, and shall continue to endeavour, to choose the preservation of all life, moving beyond mere self-preservation, and striving for a Christ-like deportment.

Yet, the trajectory and ultimate fruition of these choices are profoundly difficult to anticipate. We make choices we deem correct, but also those we later rue. We act justly, but also with selfishness and desire. Nonetheless, there is one certainty in which we place our absolute conviction: that **God intervenes** in these choices, in the ensuing journeys, and in their outcomes.

Today's passage from **Isaiah** underscores this beautifully: "the ways of the Lord are higher than our ways, and His thoughts are higher than our thoughts." This confession must never be far from our minds: irrespective of the choice we make, the Almighty is with us. At every juncture of decision, we must diligently **seek the Lord and call upon Him**. Thus, we are bound to pray that our every choice aligns with the Divine Will.

However, when we err, when we make the misguided choice—such as the prodigal son's departure, or the selection of avarice and injustice—we must be resolute in choosing to renounce that corruption and **return to the Lord**. God awaits us. He offers forgiveness and extends mercy to those who elect to return, welcoming us back into the fold as His cherished sons and daughters.

Every single moment of our lives is, in truth, "**a time to meet the Lord**," and in that profound instant of choice, God is nigh—so let us cry out to Him. As we bring this year to a close, may each of our choices constitute a beautiful sequence in the sight of the Lord, so that we may ultimately be deemed His blessed and faithful servants.

Prayer

Lord, as this year ends, we're grateful for your guidance that's brought us to where we are today. We'd really appreciate your help in following your guidance as you lead us today. Help us to live each choice of this day as if it were within Your embrace. Help us to follow your will, which goes beyond our own understanding. Give us the courage to turn away from injustice and greed, and if we fall into temptation, help us to return to You. Help us to trust You with every moment of this day and be faithful in the tasks You have given us. Amen.



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