



The Council for World Mission - Partners in Mission Unit

# CONNECTED

A BIMONTHLY NEWSLETTER | JULY 2021



## LET'S STAY CONNECTED!

**WELCOME** to this inaugural July 2021 issue of the bimonthly newsletter within the Partners in Mission Unit of CWM. Our objective is simple, to keep you **CONNECTED!** The newsletter is meant to keep mission partners and those in your networks connected with CWM, connected to other mission partners and connected with your faith by offering stories of hope and prayers for service. This is a space for mission partners facilitated by the CWM team. As you view this issue, do feedback your comments and suggestions for future releases to [vickeisha.burke@cwmission.org](mailto:vickeisha.burke@cwmission.org).

- Vickeisha King Burke  
Coordinator, Partners in Mission

**PIM Global Gathering in 2019**

### WHAT'S INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

**Greetings from the General Secretary - 2**  
**Stories from PIMs - 8**

**Reflection on 'Rise to Life'- 4**  
**and much more!**

# *Greetings from the General Secretary*

**Rev. Dr. Collin Cowan, Outgoing General Secretary**



It is my delight and privilege to write this message for the first publication of the Partners in Mission (PIM) newsletter. It is also my final such input and I do so with joy and gratitude. My colleague and successor, Rev Dr Jooseop Keum, is passionate about the PIM programme and you will find him a source of blessing and inspiration as we continue this life-flourishing journey in doing God's mission.

The PIM programme is a refreshing expression of all that CWM is about. As part of the transformation from the old way of doing mission, rooted in colonial history and Eurocentric dominance, CWM introduced PIM as a dynamic invitation for all churches, from across the regions, to fully participate in the sending and receiving of people for mission. Hitherto, the sending was one-sided and the recipients had no say in who they received and for what purpose. Today we are in a position to say that all six regions of CWM are involved in either sending or receiving partners, with most of the regions doing both.

In June 2013, the Board agreed to approve Management's recommendation to embrace the language of Partners in Mission as an appropriate replacement for "missionaries", the term that hitherto described the sharing of people programme. We argued then that the term missionary carried the colonial vestiges of the donor-recipient mentality; and that it failed to acknowledge the significant advances made in embracing mutuality and enabling the "from everywhere to everywhere" paradigm of doing mission, which was embraced by CWM in 1977. In June 2014 the Board resolved to limit the term a person can serve as partner in mission to a maximum of nine years, thereby keeping the sharing dynamic and fully participatory. These are no ordinary milestones along this journey; and we pay tribute to those who served, with distinction, for several years above this limit and have either returned to serve their church (the sending church) or are getting ready to do so.

We celebrate the gift of those who are currently on the mission field, through the PIM programme, individuals who are willing and ready to respond to the "Macedonian call" and to offer themselves for this ministry. You have the assurance of our love and support in all the ways we are able; and we pray with you for God's grace to surround and sustain you as you serve.

Finally, I am pleased to introduce Mrs Vickeisha King-Burke as the new Coordinator for the PIM programme. Vickeisha is passionate about this ministry. She comes to the task with a great deal of commitment and with a readiness to support churches, ecumenical partners and individuals in maximizing the opportunities of the PIM programme. She will serve you and the programme with diligence, discipline, sensitivity and with a duty of care.

I mentioned earlier that this is my first and final input into this newsletter as I give way to my successor. He and you are now in a symbiotic relationship, with a mandate to give life, meaning

and content to CWM's new vision statement, "Life-flourishing Communities: Living out God's promise of a New Heaven and a New Earth". I pray with you for a spirit of cooperation and solidarity along the journey ahead; and may God grant you grace to be faithful.



**Stay CONNECTED with CWM**

**A REFLECTION ON THE THEME - RISE TO LIFE**

# REFLECTION ON CWM'S THEME

Revd Dr Peter Cruchley, Mission Secretary -  
Mission Development

COUNCIL FOR WORLD MISSION  
STRATEGY FRAMEWORK 2020 -2029

---

## RISE TO LIFE

Confessing witness to life-flourishing communities

---

CWM's slogan '**Rising to Life from beneath Babylon**' reminds me that our discipleship is an exercise in public theology, a kind of walking the path of [dis]obedience Jesus took. I want to illustrate this with a personal story, which may unreasonably portray me as a loving son:

In the 1980s there used to be a neat lawn outside the St Andrews Missionary college in Birmingham, UK and it had a sign which said 'Keep off the Grass'. Whenever my mum had reason to visit the college because of an event my father had to be at she would walk across that lawn. And if she was feeling particularly strongly she would kick the sign over as she passed.

My parents were missionaries in Zambia in the 1960s and when they arrived they worked for a while alongside another White missionary who had his house ringed with white washed stones. No 'native' was allowed passed this ring of stones without his permission. My mum used to kick those stones over as well.

CWM's TIM programme was based at St Andrews Hall and the TIM students felt constantly belittled and ignored by the old White people who ran it in their 'particular' way. Which is why my home was often a sanctuary where TIM students could come to feel that rare thing in Britain: a stranger who was welcome'. My mum embodies in these moments of dissent what it means to rise to Life, to transgress the rules, boundaries and blandishments of power. She added to this not just the protest moment of stepping on such ground but in playing her part in counter creating spaces where people felt welcomed and loved.

**'Rising to Life'** is a proclamation that we won't co-operate with the world as it is, and it is a counter-creative act because it seeks to constitute the alternative world God wills day by day.

### **What is an "orienting" bible text that point to the "rising" and "arising"?**

So many we might reflect upon, like Peter in Prison in Acts 12, imagining the doors are locked until he rises to try them and find they are open. Lazarus coming forth from the tomb in John 11, because Martha unstopped her mouth and rose up against Jesus for letting her brother die. It could be Zacchaeus in Luke 19 who climbed down from his privileged place to let reparation begin. But I want to offer an unusual reading of The Parable of the Two Sons, (Matt 21: 28-32). We know the story, told just after the cleansing of the Temple. A Father asks his two sons to go into the vineyard to work, one says yes but doesn't go, the other says no but does go. Jesus uses the parable to talk about the preference God has for the tax collectors and prostitutes rather than the Pharisees, Clergy and Mission Agency staff. Jesus never answers his own question, who did the will of his father? it is assumed that the first one is more in the right. But I want to suggest that the one who agrees first and then thinks better and doesn't go to work in the vineyard is in the right. His non-co-operation models the people Jesus uplifts. There are many religious and patriarchal forces wanting us to rise to work in the vineyard, the Plantation economy and we need to think better and not be a part of it and rise up and walk in a new direction away from all that.

### **Why is 'Rise to Life' more than a paradigm for CWM's theology and ethos? Its relation to confessing witness?**

All the pressing issues and injustices of 'Living in Babylon' mean that everyday our lives, our discipleship, our humanity is always at stake. What kind of disciple/child we are is revealed not by which church we go to Sunday by Sunday but how we live our lives and with who and for what we struggle? Our actions speak so loudly our words are not heard and we need to attend to that in a world that has been promised too much by people like us. But how we speak matters, all these pressing issues and injustices are also seed and sacred grounds of God's fresh possibilities and can be named, blessed, hallowed confessed as such.

We live out our lives, our calling in an 'in-between' space. We are in the midst of Babylon and at the same time we are at the edge of the valley of God's new Life.

Discipleship is crossing a threshold, taking a crossroads while singing a blessing on the ground we leave and onto which we step. A living creatively resistantly repentantly.

**What areas of our global life together need the interrogating lens and message of 'Rise to Life' and confessing witness?**

What areas don't? We live on a planet throttled and scorched by the greed of colonialism and Capitalism and is endlessly sacrificed for an unsustainable lifestyle of the 1%. We have economies bent on polluting and plundering and profiting a particular minority. And the economic emperors tell us there is no alternative, this is the best way. We have health and social care systems which testify to the vulnerability and inter-connectedness of our lives and yet vaccines are for the particular minority. And the white wealthy nations tell the rest to be patient, there is no other way. We have communities governed by violent social forces which are not of their making but are always to their undoing. And we have political and religious emperors who love to manipulate differences making endemic racial violence, gender violence and homophobic violence. We have church leaders who want us to co-operate in organizing a cosy club that promises salvation without changing anything, least of all itself.

And yet all these are sacred grounds and seed beds for the alternative life God gardens in and labours towards.



**Stay CONNECTED with other PIMs**  
**STORIES AND PRAYERS**

# A SEASON OF ASHES: HELL OR HEAVEN?

Written by Yufen Chen

The image of hell looms large in our psyches. For some, even reading the title of this reflection might be offensive, such is the degree of negative connotation that the word carries. From a Taiwanese Christian perspective, it is hard to talk about hell calmly or intelligently with people who have been Christians from childhood, because, in so many cases, they have come to see "God the Father" as "Punisher"- I still remember how my professor of Old Testament groaned sternly with his angry tone, "God surely punishes!"

**"Jesus has transformed hell into resurrection, his shame into victory, his wound into healing power."**

However, Jesus rejects notions of clear winners and clear losers, people who will be punished; or not punished. Instead, Jesus says, "Whoever is not against us is for us" (Mark 9:40) and "God causes his sun to rise on bad as well as good, and causes it to rain on honest and dishonest alike" (Matthew 5:45). With his self-sacrifice, Jesus has transformed hell into resurrection, his shame into victory, his wound into healing power.

Reflecting on my one year lockdown in England since March 2020, it felt to me that I had descended into hell. Many others have probably experienced the same, having been as desperate, frustrated and lost as I was. Four dilemmas that marked me:

- COVID-19 saw the team with whom I worked come to an end, so I was entirely on my own with responsibility for what seemed an impossible task.
- People have a deep exhaustion from this difficult situation; there has been denial and rejection of many important events originally planned.

- How could I direct this mission? I could find neither young people nor students on the campus; where could I look for lost sheep in this empty city?
- The church with which I was serving was finally closed after a long period of uncertainty. I must restart my project with an unknown church.

**I have become a lost sheep.**

It was difficult to know the right thing to do regarding different fears and expectations.

On my return from a trip to Paris during the early days of COVID-19, one person from the church made it clear he expected me to stay in quarantine, another insisted that if I did not attend the service, she was going to quit our group. She commented that our faith teaches us to take the risk for God's sake, and we have obviously forgotten.

My COVID-19 'hell' started from this insignificant conflict, which was followed by all kinds of arguments on many new issues. People could not cope with the frightening changes, staying at home with kids, sitting in front of their laptops over 12 hours per day, ordering groceries online, forced to work from home with all the disturbances from various inadequacies, imprisoned together at home with three generations, students paying full tuition but isolated from the world, not even having access to a library. Life became heavy and boring.

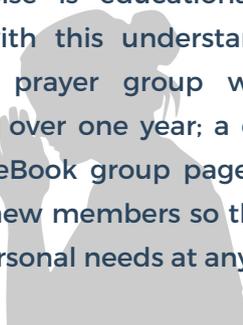


Unemployment, church closures, all shops disappearing, not even cafes open. No more meetings with friends, no more big family gatherings, no more service for disadvantaged people, for isolated groups, for homeless people, for people in all kinds of urgent needs. People were becoming hostile and defensive; it felt as though violence and conflict could easily happen anywhere, the society was in such tension. **What should a mission partner do to react in the face of a changing world due to this pandemic?**

**"Words are the images of God, they can be creative and powerful."**

Language is such a fascinating subject. In public or with fragile people, the use of language is extremely important. Words can be violent; or indifferent. In fear of criticism, people might become reluctant to speak, tempted to stay in their small interest groups as a place of safety, the fear of rejection becoming more powerful than the call to justice. But there are ways to encourage people to articulate good intentions, kindness and inclusiveness. Words are the images of God, words can be creative and powerful. Words are divine like God's paradigm of creation and wisdom; we should have the desire to take God's words as bread and become the mirror of God's love. Building up good verbal interaction within groups is the basic ground to allow any mission project to grow.

The words of prayers are the first steps for teaching church members to mirror God's image. A praying exercise is educational theology in praxis. It was with this understanding that an online morning prayer group was organized, meeting now for over one year; a daily reflection posted on a FaceBook group page; a prayer link was opened for new members so that people can communicate personal needs at any moment.



## A Special Time?

People sometimes tell me that I should reduce my workload, my scheduled weekly gatherings or delete some annual events, especially since we are restricted and things are so unclear. At the beginning of lockdown, I felt helpless and confused the noise of the world became so disturbing. But then I decided to listen to my inner whispering and it was with this faith that I finally achieved something that could represent a whole year's toil. It was with this alertness and super autonomy that I stepped out along a path where I saw how God was merciful and faithful. During this long lockdown, we have had no clear keys to direct our original agenda, no routine work to follow, the working structure has disappeared. **In this moment, we need Jesus who confronts injustice and risks opposition rather than conforming to a problematic status quo, out of touch with a suffering world.**

We know the lockdown has made many existing and hidden problems worse, but simultaneously, it has been a special time: A loving family or couple will cherish enjoying time together. Bosses have learned how to trust employees who are working from home. Teachers have employed greater efforts to make online courses more attractive and creative, and to facilitate mutually reactive activities. Students have learned to be responsible for their own work. The power derived from such autonomy could be an incentive to learn. While church buildings were empty for the whole year, we thought they were in real danger of dying. Contrarily, we were surprised to find some people returning to their forgotten congregations. Some were looking for spiritual guidance, others felt they were responsible and had to make some efforts not to forsake the "falling" cities.



**Moon Festival Virtual Celebration  
(Yufen pictured right)**

Although some Christians have struggled to stay with online services, others have accepted this new possibility to serve. They have engaged much more than before. They prayed for the world, for all the pandemic's victims, for the Church and for the needy. They tried to connect with different churches to support each other, to encourage and to unite in prayer.

**"If selfishness is a core human failing, we might say that loving concern is a saving grace."**



We have been saved by entering a new life of self-sacrifice, with no thought for ourselves, but only love for others. Our terrified society is saved by such generosity, the creation of alternative working systems, and new ways to sustain the ties of community. The kingdom will come on earth, as in heaven. We need to put aside selfishness and build another sustainable world.



**Yufen Chen (Rev.)** serves as a mission partner with the United Reformed Church in its mission among Taiwanese and Mandarin speaking communities. She is from the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan (PCT)

## **Descent and Rise**

We cannot expect to solve the problem of 'COVID-19' and return to our previous daily life; we must prepare to envision a constant uncertain future. Our faith must prepare us for that, and we need to practice an unselfish devotion with stunning and moving consistency.

When we look back over this past year, a year of restriction and imprisonment, should we pronounce that it is a lost year? No! We can say that we are the soldiers in this battle and we have survived. Now we need healing, and prepare ourselves to help heal the world.

**It is our belief that in dying and rising, Jesus shows us the pathway to life. Through suffering and despair this pathway leads us to new beginnings.** After this heavy and difficult year, I have learned to die and give up my pride, die and give up the certainty that my way is best, die and give up my attachments. I have had to unlearn so many things. This has been a journey of spiritual dying and rising again from the dead. I feel so blessed by this season of Ashes.

*If I ascend to heaven,*

*You are there;*

*If I make my bed in Sheol,*

*You are there.*

*If I take the wings of the morning*

*And settle at the farthest limits of the sea,*

*Even there your hand shall lead me.*

**(Psalm 139:8-10)**

**Dear Heavenly Father:**

Thank you for calling us to show your hope and light in this place in this changeable and confusing era. Please hear us as we pray for our mission partners. We pray for our mission work. As the whole world has been turned upside down, our mission work has faced its limits and its methods need to change. Nevertheless thank you for giving us the privilege of technology and enabling us to continue our work through online meeting and for inspiring us with creative ideas. Many of us are still challenged by technological changes. Lord, we pray that you will give us wisdom to find ideal ways to continue your work. And when we get tired of endless online meetings and the concentration they demand, please give us your strength to deal with each situation.

We pray for effective priorities and time management in our work. When we look at the piles of emails and tasks to do, we realise our limitations. Please give us spiritual discernment to see what tasks are important to you and to manage them in the right order and the right time. And make us brave enough to cut out and put aside what you would regard as less important matters. Keep us from pride and desperation when we compare our work with that of others. And help us keep a balance in our life of work and rest so that we remain your wise servants.

Lord we pray for our families. Thank you for our family members and church members who are always with us and praying for us. They have a feeling of responsibility just as we do, and you help them to walk with us and support us while we struggle to set up new ways of working. We admit we do not treat our families with kindness and can even behave rudely as they are close and familiar to us. Please forgive us and help us not to become too tired and bad-tempered. Please shine your love and peace on our families; help us to realise your immense love and patience and the value of our families. Some of us have not seen our families for a very long time; some have family members who are sick, and some have been bereaved. Please comfort us and our families with your peace. We know that you are always with us, holding our hand, even when we walk through the darkest valley.

Dear God, we pray for the communities we serve. Our prayers can often seem so feeble and insignificant: be merciful and hear us when we pray with sincerity. Help us to reach out to everyone who needs your love; quench anyone who feels thirsty and shine your light on anyone who feels in a dark place. Even if we rarely meet people in the community please open their hearts and ears and may they get to know your love for them through our humble meetings and conversations.

Heavenly Father, show your love and mercy on our work, families and communities, help us to live together in peace and harmony and build your kingdom through us!

In Jesus' name, Amen

**Miss So Young Fung**

Mission partner with the URC from the PCK



**Prayers for Mission Partners  
from a Mission Partner**

# POST-COVID-19: Pastoral Care Reflection and Action

Written by: Li Hau-Tiong

Hundred of millions of people worldwide have been infected by the plague of the century - COVID-19, causing a global catastrophe. More than three millions have since died in the misfortune, and the death toll is still on the rise. Although Singapore is one of the few countries that outperformed others in the prevention of this wave of pandemic, the hidden issues of family, society, and culture have now been exposed. In addition, will the measures taken by the government and society during pandemic prevention create a sense of alienation between people? Is the people's enthusiasm for participating in community public affairs affected? Has the interaction or closeness of family members diminished? Will the border control policy weaken the worldview and competitiveness of our people? The above are common issues faced by the Singaporean society as well as the entire global community. We need to tackle them with caution and find solutions to address them.

## Challenges and Responses of the Singapore Church

Like other religious groups, the Christian Churches are also affected in this wave of pandemic. I have been assigned to The Presbyterian Church in Singapore as a mission partner since March 2020. During this period, I experienced the most stringent circuit breaker isolation measures implemented by the local government, which included safe distancing, mandatory wearing of masks, real-name management, and working from home. In addition, except for the consumer goods industry (supermarkets, markets), other non-essential businesses were closed; all public places, churches, and temples had to cease physical activities. How did the local church cope with the challenges of "lockdown"? How to continue with the witness mission of the church? In the post-pandemic era, what are the church's "advanced deployment" actions and theological reflections? I will present a general overview to serve as a reference to the CWM family.

### 1. Local Church - Digitalization

The most direct impact to the church was the complete cessation of physical worship. According to government regulations, the number of church worshipers should not exceed two people; pastoral care, fellowship exchanges and other activities had also been greatly hampered. Secondly, community ministries (especially care for the elderly) had come to a halt. Faced with these challenges, the church was compelled to adopt "digitalization": online worship services, computer-produced videos, online gatherings, care services through video platform and other types of ministry to replace traditional pastoral approaches. In addition, they also encourage their children and grandchildren or trained caregivers to assist the elders to use 3C products to participate in church and community activities. This pre-emptive ministry has greatly enhanced the church capacity to care for the elderly.

What will the society look like after the implementation of the "anti-pandemic new life"?

How to turn a crisis into an opportunity through the power of faith?

In the post-pandemic era, what are the church's "advanced deployment" actions and theological reflections?



Even when face-to-face interaction was impossible, some pastors offered online courses on faith-related topics and organized more in-depth intellectual forums or group gatherings with youth members.



I have been invited to host three continuous panel discussions on "Values of Faith" and "Situational Ministry" since June. This shows that young people of our church have a high level of interest and demand for theological and religious topics.

### 2. Witness in Suffering

The community ministries run by most churches were forced to stop. For example: senior care, youth placement and family service work were all affected. However, a crisis is also a turning point. Three churches of PCS have been invited by the government to join the work of caring for the homeless. Affected by the pandemic, the number of homeless people has increased dramatically. The three churches opened unused church spaces to provide temporary shelter for short-term homeless people. One of the pastors described this as a ministry that builds up one another: whilst the needs of the disadvantaged are met, Christians also learn the lesson of "being a disciple." During the border closure period, many workers from Johor Bahru, Malaysia, who commuted to Singapore, chose to stay in Singapore to earn a living, but they were left homeless. Fortunately, local churches also opened their space and dormitories to accommodate these commuting groups of people. These are good testimonies of the Christian community amidst the plague disaster.



### 3. The Ministries of PCS - Localization

Apart from the transformation of the local church's ministries, the PCS also initiated an update of organizational functions. During the pandemic prevention period, the PCS staff accurately grasped the measures and laws of the public sector and disseminated them to the local churches quickly; not only did they serve as an information provider, they also became a platform for sharing resources, such as raising funds to relieve the plight of food shortage among the pastors in Nepal and allocating medical supplies donated by the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan to local churches and institutions.

## Christians' Reflection and Action

Under the current impact of the pandemic, the focus of social attention is mostly on medical, technological, economic, and political issues. However, as far as Christianity is concerned, theological reflection and practice are the keys to enabling the church to witness God's love and salvation beyond adversities.

### 1. Facing Disasters

Humans' attitudes towards disasters are often fearful and awe-stricken, and COVID-19 is no exception. When faced with disasters, some Christians often ask: "why" do such things happen? Some even blame it on men's "sin" and God's "condemnation" or judgment. The former is no doubt a subject that human-beings need to reflect on – wrong-doings must be corrected; as for the latter, God's sovereignty must be respected, and men should not speculate. If God is love, the occurrence of suffering may be a reminder for the world to turn over their minds and lifestyles to maintain the sustainable management of the created world. **The church may need to pay more attention to what God wants us to do at this time to witness the love of Christ.**

Taiwan's performance in this wave of pandemic prevention may be regarded as exemplary, for not only does it effectively curb the spread of the virus, it also activates warnings, shares pandemic prevention strategies and medical resources. According to the analysis of domestic pandemic prevention experts, this stellar performance is the result of the painful lesson of combating SARS in 2003. In other words, it is the experience and results of struggling and learning from suffering; it is a process of resurrection-that is, the core of Christianity, a model of theology from the cross to the resurrection. **Therefore, in the face of disasters, we should strengthen our faith, and eventually develop tenacious vitality.**

### 2. New Variables of "Globalization"

For a long time, the theologians from the north and the south hold different views on globalization issues. This plague has brought new variables: the transportation system of the global village has contributed to the spread of the virus, causing tens of millions of people to be infected; and digital technology has become a tool to maintain the operation of society. What is the objective of "globalization"? What is the difference between the universal (unity) movement and the global movement? Could "globalization" be another construction project of the "Tower of Babel"? What is the role of viruses, bacteria and other creatures in the globalization movement? The pandemic has also spawned various issues such as racial discrimination, xenophobia, antagonism between the rich and the poor, and the rights of migrant workers. These issues are gradually tearing the human community apart. **How can the church, which claims to be a messenger of peace, respond to, and face these problems?**

### 3. POST COVID-19 – "Compassion Movement"

Karen Armstrong regards "compassion" as a good way to alleviate human suffering and actively promotes the "Charter of Charity." Benevolence is a kind of compassion, a practical action of empathy and sympathy. It is often translated as "compassion" in the Bible, while the Hebrew word has the meaning of "womb", which is the place where life is born and protected. **The "Benevolence Movement" is a caring action for all human-beings and creatures: when suffering comes to the world, no one can stay out of the way, because we are part of the world community.**

For Christians, this is the "Jesus Movement" or "God's Kingdom Movement" - the unity and salvation of God's family (universality). People's fear of COVID-19 has caused estrangement and hostility between peoples, races, and nations, which require the power of love to stitch them together. **The model of Jesus' "sacrificial love" is the model that the church must follow.**

Whether it is the suffering of the local community or the needs of the universal community, it is the mission of Christians and the responsibility of all human-beings. Facing the post-pandemic era, let us practice the basic command of "kindness", which is also the teaching of Jesus' heavenly parable in Matthew 25:40.

***“Truly I tell you,  
whatever you did for  
one of the least of  
these brothers and  
sisters of mine,  
you did for me.”***

**- Matthew 25:40**



**Li Hau- Tiong (Rev. Dr.)** serves as Advisor for Community Outreach Ministry with the Presbyterian Church in Singapore. She is from the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan (PCT)

Our gracious loving father, Almighty God. The giver and sustainer of life. As we continue to serve you in this season of great uncertainty, help us to remain vigilant and resilient knowing that you are our hope and source of strength.

We bring before you all those engaged in the advancement of God's mission, more so we present to you the mission partners serving under the umbrella of CWM across the globe. We ask you Lord to watch over them and grant them the much needed strength to overcome every obstacle that they may encounter during this period of the pandemic. We pray for their families and loved ones, those serving with them in their mission fields and those living in their home countries.

We pray, oh Lord, for peace in the places and communities were they are serving. We know that wherever you send us Lord, you go before us and accompany us through out our mission journey. We continue to trust in you Lord even when the going gets tough because you are dependable and we rely on you for courage and victory.

We pray for the commissioned workers serving in various institutions as administrators, teachers, nurses, doctors, lay leaders and pastors. May you lead and guide them as they make decisions in these difficult times. We ask that you grant wisdom and understanding to all ministers as they continue to propagate the Gospel of salvation to all people of all nations.

May the wilderness of this time and the uncertainty we may feel, strengthen our resolve to lean on your word, abide in your presence, and be guided by your enduring and powerful Spirit.

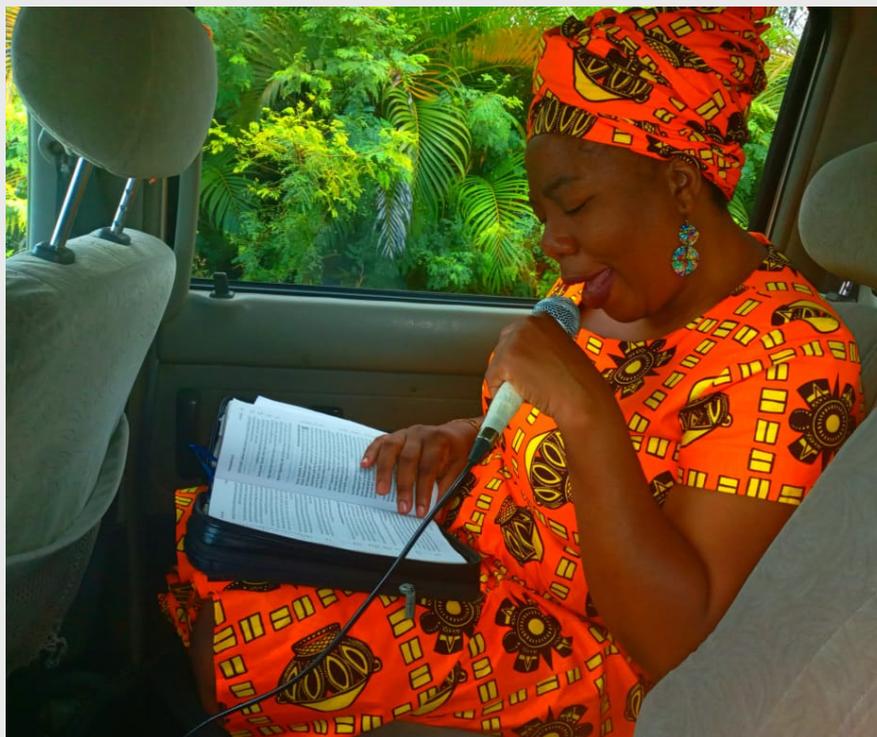
In the precious name of your son Jesus, hear our prayers. Amen!

**Mrs. Cynthia Mwita**  
**Mission partner from UCZ**  
**-serving with the UCJCI**

# PREACHING THE GOSPEL IN THE ERA OF COVID-19

Written by: Jane Kaluba

The COVID 19 pandemic has become a significant global crisis that requires individuals, organisations, the Church and nations to take necessary steps to cope. As a Minister of Word and Sacraments in the United Church in Jamaica and the Cayman Island, ministering at Immanuel/Boscobel charge in St. Mary,



I never imagined that a time would come when I will be preaching to the camera! The COVID 19 pandemic brought all the changes that no one ever imagined. Churches were closed and depending on the spike in numbers of people infected, it became the new normal for the government to limit the number of people gathered for worship or to close the doors to the church entirely.

The context in which the two congregations I pastor are located, are homes occupied by many retired senior citizens. Most of the members in my two charges are 65 years old and above and this was the age group that the government ordered to stay home as they were most vulnerable to COVID 19. That meant that the church was going to be empty. As leaders of the church we decided to go digital as quickly as possible. In the time of no physical contact, it meant that members would have to take up the challenge to learn how to use technology for various programmes of the church like Sunday Worship, Bible study, Board meetings, Prayers and Fasting, counselling and Congregational meetings etc. Most of the older members of the church could not manage to operate their gadgets and some entirely refused to use platforms like Zoom.



This is the time that as a leader that I began to seek the face of the Lord in prayer. (Hebrews 11:6) I believed in my heart that the Lord would show me ways in which I could reach out to his children who were locked down in their homes afraid to be exposed to the virus. The idea of walking in the community and preaching the word came up but how would I do it since there needed to be 'social distance?' This is when God showed me one of the elders in the church, a man with a great passion for Evangelism - Bro. Hopeton Gordon. I shared the idea with him and suggested that we use the loudspeaker that belonged to the church. He agreed.



I remember the first day he came home and before we could go in the community, we decided to pray. We thanked God for his faithfulness and asked him to minister to the people who were afraid and some of them lonely in their homes and that the Holy Spirit could minister to them. I had prepared some short verses and Words to share and thereafter we prayed for the people. We drove through the community playing gospel music as the vehicle was fitted with an amplifier. We could see people coming out of their houses wanting to hear what was going on. Some people were peeping out of their windows and some in their yards, were waving at us encouraging us to go on. We would find a spot where we would stop and introduce ourselves, encourage the people and explain the purpose of the mission which was to encourage people to hold on to God during the difficult times of the pandemic.

After introductions, Pastor Gordon would then pray and read the Bible and later hand over to me to give a short devotion and then enter into prayers for the community, individuals, and families. At end of the prayers, we would give the name of the church and phone numbers for the minister for those who would want counselling or someone to talk or visit the church for a one to one counselling but observing physical distance.

#### TESTIMONIES

The days that followed were exciting as we were receiving testimonies from members of community calling and testifying that they were able to listen to the preaching and the prayers and that they were greatly ministered to. **One member from the community actually said she never felt alone.** Some members of the church were able to testify that God was at work and the community outreach should continue.

Our prayer is that outreach will continue even with the few resources that we have. The church has seen its offering drop drastically making it difficult to find resources for fuel for transport to take us around in the community. Going though the community helps us to identify those in need of material or spiritual support. It has also opened a way for personal evangelism while physically distancing.

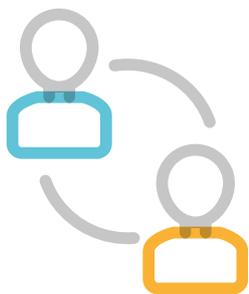
**What a joy it has brought to our hearts that even if the doors to the church are closed, the gospel is not closed. Glory be to God!!!**





### **Romans 12:4-5 ESV**

**For as in one body we have many members, and the members do not all have the same function, so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another.**



# **Let's Stay Connected!**

**Thank you for viewing this inaugural issue of **CONNECTED**! We hope you were both informed and inspired. Share your comments and input at [vickeisha.burke@cwmission.org](mailto:vickeisha.burke@cwmission.org).**