

TIM 95/96 A PLACE OF FEELING THE POWER OF THE PENTECOST

Rev Goodwin Zainga (TIM 1995-96)

Introduction

I start by thanking God Almighty who allowed me to be in a group of 12 exciting and loving young people from different parts of the world. In our TIM group, all the six regions of the Council for World Mission (CWM) were represented. I also express my gratitude to TIM 95/96 *gurus*: late Rev Ernest Cruchley, may his soul continue to rest in eternal peace, Prof Roderick Hewitt, Madeline Logan, Francis Brienen, Bishop Pothirajuru, not forgetting staff members of both St Andrews Hall, Selly Oak Colleges, Birmingham, UK and Tamilnadu Theological Seminary, Madurai, India, Churches of Christ in Malawi (CCM) leadership who accorded me such a life changing opportunity. Finally, I thank the church leadership of Congregational Federation Church (CF) and United Reformed Church (URC) in the UK, as well as the Church of South India (CSI) for accommodating us during our journey. The TIM 95/96 was a very rewarding experience as it was a conducive place encountering God at many fronts.

Experienced the Power of the Pentecost

If one knows the Pentecost story in Acts 2 as a glorious story only, then one misses the point because it is also a story of chaos and confusion as is also reported in Genesis 11:1-9. This describes my TIM 95/96. At first, I was both excited and confused, at certain times I was the one causing confusion. I remember one particular night whilst I was at Stepney Green church in London, instead of switching off an electrical kettle, I switched off a fridge switch and that was after evening devotion. We all slept nicely, but in the morning we all woke up to a pool of water in the kitchen. I kept quiet as we were mopping the floor, whilst others were furious and others were laughing while cleaning the mess. For me that was one the confusion. It was during evening devotions that I confessed to the group members as I was the culprit. We all laughed and hugged each other. The other confusion was during washing, when all of us had to use the same washing machine as a group. How could I mix my underwear with those of my sisters in the washing machine? I was puzzled, this was another confusion as I was coming from a dominant Malawian and African patriarchal society. Another confusion was experienced in India at Madurai, when I was hospitalized for two days due to dehydration and diarrhoea. The first time to be admitted and in a hospital in a foreign country. Am grateful to Kenneth Tlhabiwa from Botswana who was my guardian and my 'brother's keeper'. I remember him scolding me because I was groaning like a baby in the hospital in front of female nurses. "Behave like a man" he charged at me. That was harsh my brother, Ken, but it did the trick as I stopped crying like a baby.

On the contrary, I then embraced totally the power of Pentecost, as during prayers one evening at Stepney Green church, we all prayed the Lord's Prayer in our mother tongues, for me that was a very rewarding experience of the Pentecost. I realised that the God that was once monopolised by 'early missionaries can hear me in my *Chichewa* language even when am in Europe. The other wonderful experience was when I led devotion at St Andrews Hall in Birmingham on Luke 17:11-17, 'Jesus Heals Ten Men with Leprosy'. The theme of my devotion was in a form of a question, "Do we give thanks to the Lord?" Towards the end of the devotion, I asked everyone who was present that particular morning to say "Thank You

TIM 95/96 A PLACE OF FEELING THE POWER OF THE PENTECOST

Rev Goodwin Zainga (TIM 1995-96)

Jesus' in ones local language, I started by saying 'Zikomo Yesu' in Chichewa and then I invited all to do the same, I could see people's face smiling, mind you at St Andrews Hall we had friends from different parts of the world including Americans and Lebanese. I remember a Lebanese young man who came to me afterwards and said thank you Goodwin this is the first time I have spoken in my local language in a group like this since coming to the UK, for me that was a Pentecost moment.

An Interface of the Gospel and Culture

During TIM 95/96, I started to see and discover that the Gospel of Jesus Christ confronts culture. I realised that one's culture can either help or hinder the extension of God's kingdom here on earth. The Gospel confronts toxic and dominant masculinities in my culture which state that a girl child is not important as compared to a male child. The bone of contention being that in terms of education, it is better to educate a male child because he will be a 'bread winner' as opposed to a girl child who will end up being married after all. It was a turning point for me to learn from TIM sisters in the group who displayed quality leadership skills not only in decision making processes of the group, but also in praise and worship during church services. Vinise Moananu was a such a powerful worshipper and introduced me to Vineyard Worship Music my favourites being "Refiners Fire" and "Change my Heart o God".

Another dominant masculinity which I started to question is a notion that a young person cannot lead or contribute in all levels of leadership. I vividly remember late Rev Ernest Cruchley, quoting to all of us 1 Timothy 4:12, "Do not let anyone despise you because you are young..." In many cultures, young people are denied the opportunity to lead and serve in the church, even to contribute in decision making processes in the church and community.

A Solid Foundation of a Theological Inquest

I learnt that 'mission' is a contested term, but in our TIM 95/96 we discovered that 'as the fire exists by burning so the church exists for God's mission'. *Missio Dei* (God's mission) according to Bosch (1991: 10) means "God's self-revelation as the One who loves the world, God's involvement in and with the world, the nature and activity of God, which embraces both the church and the world, and in which the church is privileged to participate". Notably, Bosch emphasises that churches are only participants in God's mission and that is the only reason for the existence of churches, to be active players in God's initiated mission.

TIM laid a theological foundation that enabled me to further my theological studies with University of Wales Lampeter (UK) and University of Kwa-Zulu Natal (RSA) where there was a fruitful reunion with Prof. Hewitt who once again was my pastor, mentor and lecturer. It was at the University of Kwa-Zulu Natal that I further ascertained that, according to Mitchell (2012: 417), a conceptual framework of *Missio Dei* includes the following tasks: "Proclamation of the gospel of Jesus Christ; Protection of and reverence for all life, both human and non-human; Denunciation of all exclusionary practices in our communities; Modelling a way of living together that demonstrates that we are sincere in what we profess

TIM 95/96 A PLACE OF FEELING THE POWER OF THE PENTECOST

Rev Goodwin Zainga (TIM 1995-96)

regarding God's saving activity in Christ". In this regard, the marginalised' are part and parcel of God's mission of liberation who are affected by the brokenness of the world ...who face life-denying challenges in their daily lives (Mitchell 2012: 415). The brokenness of the world is manifested by some of the following: hunger and starvation, various forms of marginalization, climatic changes, disregard of human life and dignity, tyrant political leadership, abuse of public offices in all manners, teen age pregnancies and many more. The manifesto of our Lord Jesus Christ as recorded in Isaiah 61:1-3 and repeated in Luke 4:18 challenges churches to participate in dealing away with life denying forces and promoting life flourishing activities.

I came across a mission methodology framed by Osmer which helps churches to have a meaningful engagement in the church and community that promote life flourishing. Osmer (2008: 4) accentuates that his theological method responds to the following questions. "What is going on? Why is this going on? What ought to be going? How might the church respond?" Therefore, Osmer's tasks assist in helping churches and communities to outline mission activities following a logic sequence. This Osmer's mission methodology is in line with our TIM 95/96 thinking where we discovered that ***"there are no problems and impossibilities in life, but only challenges that need solutions."***

An Understanding of the Concept of Partnership in Mission.

One of the CWM's strategic pillars discovered in our time, is the concept of partnership in mission. Prof Hewitt used to say "Beware of mission lone rangers as they are dangerous to God's mission." After my theological studies in RSA, in 2014 I was appointed as a mission secretary in CCM up to now. So, in 2016 this concept of partnership was employed, CCM with the help of CWM and Churches Action Relief development (CARD) was involved in a community development project which targeted winter crop irrigation farming in three districts of Balaka, Mangochi and Phalombe in the southern region of Malawi. The three districts were adversely affected by floods of 2014/2015 growing season. In this project, 301 farmers were given 5 kgs maize seed, 10 kgs basal dressing fertilizers and 10 kgs top dressing fertilizers.

TIM 95/96 A PLACE OF FEELING THE POWER OF THE PENTECOST

Rev Goodwin Zainga (TIM 1995-96)



Rev Goodwin Zainga during the verification exercise of the community engagement programme

Through this partnership with CARD I gained knowledge of community engagement that I will use in other CCM initiated programmes.

On the same concept of partnership in mission, the youth invited me as a guest speaker during the October 2021 annual youth conference held in Dedza district in Malawi and the theme was based on Colossians 3:2. Though ordained but youth ministry which I embraced during TIM 95/96 is still alive within myself. At the youth conference, about 500 gathered together to praise and worship God, sharing the word



Rev Goodwin Zainga on the right, attending a youth conference

TIM 95/96 A PLACE OF FEELING THE POWER OF THE PENTECOST

Rev Goodwin Zainga (TIM 1995-96)

of God, receiving teachings on giving and also doing some sporting activities with fellow youth from the area where the conference was held.

Conclusion

My sincere thanks also go to the following TIM 95/96 members:

Ye Yi-yung – Presbyterian Church in Taiwan (PCT)

Ann San-joo - Presbyterian Church in Korea (PCK)

Tang Charles Chu-yin – Hong Kong Council of the Churches of Christ in China (HKCCCC)

Lisa Lewis – United Church Jamaica and Cayman Islands (UCJCI)

Vinise Moananu – Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand (PCANZ)

Sepola Matusi – Ekalesia Kelesia Tuvalu (EET)

Marion Llewellyn – United Church of Scotland (UCS)

Garth Frazer – United Church in Canada (UCC)

John Pakiarajah Bose - Church of South India (CSI)

Jose Macauze – United Congregation Church of Southern Africa, Mozambique Synod (UCCSA)

Tshireletso Kenneth Tlhabiwa – United Congregation Church of Southern Africa, Botswana Synod (UCCSA).

I owe them my gratitude for putting up with, *Zikomo* to all tutors and placement supervisors. **Amen!!**