

Sundays
with **CWM**

Devotional Book 2022

Rise to Life

2nd Quarter
Apr - Jun



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Vision & Mission Statements

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.”

In this mission statement, the emphasis is on naming this “violent, abused and grieving world” that ought to be replaced with life-flourishing communities, based on justice and peace. The means to that end 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.

The Council for World Mission (CWM) is a worldwide partnership of 32 churches, committed to sharing their resources of people, skills, insights and money to carry our God's mission.

CARIBBEAN

- GCU** Guyana Congregational Union
UCJCI United Church in Jamaica and the Cayman Islands

AFRICA

- CCM** Churches of Christ in Malawi
FJKM Church of Jesus Christ in Madagascar
UCZ United Church of Zambia
UCCSA United Congregational Church of Southern Africa
UPCSA Uniting Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa

EAST ASIA

- GPM** Gereja Presbyterian Malaysia
HKCCCC Hong Kong Council of the Church of Christ in China
PCK Presbyterian Church of Korea
PCM Presbyterian Church of Myanmar
PCS Presbyterian Church in Singapore
PCT Presbyterian Church in Taiwan

EUROPE

- CF** Congregational Federation
PCW Presbyterian Church of Wales
PKN Protestantse Kerk in Nederland
URC United Reformed Church
UWI Union of Welsh Independents

PACIFIC

- CCCAS** Congregational Christian Church in American Samoa
CCCS Congregational Christian Church in Samoa
CUNZ Congregational Union of New Zealand
EKT Ekalesia Kelisiano Tuvalu
EPM Etaretia Porotetani Maohi
KUC Kiribati Uniting Church
NCC Nauru Congregational Church
PCANZ Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand
UCPNG United Church in Papua New Guinea
UCSI United Church in the Solomon Islands

SOUTH ASIA

- CNI** Church of North India
COB Church of Bangladesh
CSI Church of South India
PCI Presbyterian Church of India

Foreword

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ Jesus,

Greetings of Peace and Joy from the Council for World Mission (CWM) in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. As we enter the new year, we are still grappling with various challenges and uncertainties caused by the ongoing Covid-19 global pandemic. The Pandemic also unveiled various social, political, and economic inequalities, and we continue to struggle with the structures that create these inequalities.

Nevertheless, it is my prayer that this year be kind to us, allowing us to meet one another and worship together. As people of God and as we walk by faith, we continue to hope that the power of God's resurrection will provide us strength to overcome all these challenges.

I am pleased to present to you the '*Sundays with CWM*,' a weekly devotional booklet intended to assist you as a resource to use during your personal, family or congregational gatherings to worship God. In the context of CWM celebrating 40 years of Training in Mission (TIM) programme, this year's devotional booklet is a compilation of meditations written by the former TIM participants, most of whom are upcoming young leaders of our member churches.

As the former TIM participants, the contributors in this booklet share their faith, various missional experiences, and aspirations. I believe these meditations will help rekindle our faith and trust in the Lord. They provide us new insights and prayers for our weekly worship gatherings as we move towards transforming our families and congregations into life flourishing communities as part of the theme of our strategic framework, '*Rise to Life: Confessing witness to life-flourishing communities*.'

Keeping the ongoing pandemic and the challenges of printing and distributing the booklets in mind, we proceed with the e-booklets instead of the printed version. I would like to thank all the contributors of weekly devotions as well as our CWM staff for their commitment and hard work in bringing these devotional booklets available to all of us.

Wish you all a blessed and joy-filled year 2022.

Rev. Dr Jooseop Keum
General Secretary

April



Reflection

Chains that were meant to bound and bind, gives life?

I have framed the question above for you to consider. It is obvious, that the use of slavery and tools of oppression can bind and blind a people and nation. In which it once did and probably still does; hold captive the people that were once called 'barbaric' and 'evil'. The Natives of life flourishing, self-sustaining lands; living peacefully and reverently with nature and humanity. We have come a far way since those perilous times, and it is the hearts of strong children, women and men; though the spirit of a Great Divine that we have 'streams in the dessert'.

Today we have forgotten our past, in neglect, we look to the future, abandoning our rich glorious heritage, we now look to 'a white god' for our (religious, social, ethnic and personal) identity. Such colonial absurdity! I stand in solidarity with Jamaican singer 'Sizzla'; when he sings "a white god will not save us from a white man oppression". As we reminisce on the past, looking to the future, to avoid the disastrous mistakes of the past. We need to remember God's promise to us, 'that there will be a stream in the desert'. But we are the hands and feet of God! So it is primarily an "I and I" phenomenon, as the Jamaicans would put it (God In Us).

As we come face to face with oppression and anxiety especially when we are in the same room with a white man (someone we perceive to be superior), we need to remember our voice, and God's Voice in us. We have a voice too! Staring into the problem with the eyes of determination and not defeat, we find who we are. The climate catastrophe, our greed and religious injustice of skin colour are mental graves of the past which we are choosing to take into the future. A deconstruction is what we need to rebuild a healthy society for generations to come, not the value of white consumerism and white industrialization! We can now learn from the shackles and chains that once held us captive. We can use those chains build a barrier around our lakes and reserves and rich forests. We can use those chains to build bridges to unite people of the same story. We can use the Overcome Evil, by being brave enough to tell a story that is ours.

Christopher Latchman,
Guyana Presbyterian Church

Prayer

Black Jesus we pray

- ✿ For the earth we are destroying by our need to have more than we need. (Our Greed)
- ✿ For the unity of our people and the deconstruction of western ideas which bind. (our liberation)
- ✿ For justice and peace among all nations who are products of slavery and human trafficking to this day. (End of Slavery and corruption)

10 Apr

Palm/Passion Sunday

Scripture

Isaiah 50:4-9, Ps 31:9-16
Phil 2:5-11, Luke 22:14-23:56

Reflection

Called to Fight Injustice

In entering the Holy Week, we are introduced with a particular reminder to get into the depths of Jesus' suffering to feel how deep is His emotional pain, even if we can only imagine the breadth of His physical pain. Because we cannot know the power of His sacrifice unless we really know the suffering cost of it.

However, the readings emphasize particular tones to the more general theme, namely the cost of being faithful to the LORD's calling and God's vindication of the servant's obedience. It is important to point out that the servant mentioned in Isaiah does not receive this suffering passively; but he actively chooses to encounter the conflict that arises through his proclamation. Such suffering, in and of itself, is not vicarious. It is a byproduct of speaking truth to power.

This was reflected in the last days in the mission of Jesus. The one who suffer unjustly was cautious against the corruption of the world that arises to dominate and control all forms of life. The marginalized, the poor and the voiceless are at the heart of Christ mission on earth—bottom-up, not top-down.

Jesus washing the feet of the disciples was the display of His humility and His servanthood. It is not a humility of silence but a humility to serve. It is through this humility that one could take up the cross and encounter every circumstance in life. The readings remind the faithful of the cost of discipleship. There will be times in the Christian life when living into God's calling comes at a price.

In many parts of the world, we are intensely aware of "the signs of the times" with more and more corruption, in-fighting within and between political parties, the growing rate of people living with hunger, people losing their homes and lands. In other places things are worse particularly in the distribution of covid-19 aids. The poor and the voiceless are the victims. Who will extend the mission of Christ to fight for the poor? Who will stand for the marginalized?

Rev Dr Tioti Timon,
Tangintebu Theological College, Kiribati

Prayer

- ✿ Pray for resistance and resilience against the powerful to force existing empires not to corrupt justice and violate the nations' human right.
- ✿ Pray for a complete obedience to speak truth to power in the midst of corruption and injustice.

Scripture

**Isaiah 52:13-53:12,
Hebrew 4:14-16; 5:7-9**

Reflection

From Suffering To Hope

It was a day before Good Friday. We, the 2013TIM members, had a unique devotion with some friends coming from different religious backgrounds. “What is the connection while seeing the Cross?” This was the main question we were asked. “The identity of Christians” was the answer from them.

What is the identity as we testify ourselves as Christians? Do we look like Christians? Do we really live out our faith? It is a perfect timing to rethink ourselves of being Jesus’ followers through His path to Calvary.

Nowadays people search for the better life which means to have higher social position and more salary. However, Jesus went to the opposite direction. He lowered himself and humbly fulfilled the mission. He was ignored, rejected, punished and wounded. These were not separate events or a still picture, but keep happening.

The image of Jesus is also totally upside down. He was born as human being, grew up and lived ordinarily. Moreover, “He has no form nor comeliness; and when we see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him.” (Isaiah 53:2) His past must bring out the feeling of sadness, loneliness and fear. Even He prayed and requested with loud cries and tears to God on His death before the Cross.

However, the greater power and support is revealed by Jesus’ suffering and salvation because He has been through such real experiences and emotions that He understood us and sensed our struggles. Back to our life, there are definitely numerous difficulties and challenges. Are we willing to endure the uncomfortable process to accomplish the goal?

*In the bulb there is a flower; in the seed, an apple tree;
In cocoons, a hidden promise: butterflies will soon be free!
In the cold and snow of winter there’s a spring that waits to be,
Unrevealed until its season, something God alone can see.*

*There’s a song in every silence, seeking word and melody;
There’s a dawn in every darkness, bringing hope to you and me.
From the past will come the future; what it holds, a mystery,
Unrevealed until its season, something God alone can see.*

*In our end is our beginning; in our time, infinity;
In our doubt there is believing; in our life, eternity,
In our death, a resurrection; at the last, a victory,
Unrevealed until its season, something God alone can see.*

This is the song called "Hymn of Promise" (by Natalie A. Sleeth 1986). Just like on Good Friday, we commemorate the crucifixion and sacrifice of Jesus, yet it is not the end of the story. There is always a hope - from the sorrow to joy, from the darkness to dawn, and from the suffering to mercy and grace.

Lai, Yin-Ting,
Presbyterian Church in Taiwan

Prayer

Dear Lord,
Thank You for coming into the world,
Thank You for bearing the trials and carrying our burdens,
Thank You for stepping to the road of Calvary and being crucified on the cross,
And thank You for giving us grace freely through your sacrifice and resurrection.

May we become more like You,
May our words and deeds reflecting to the oneness in You,
May we care and serve in love because of the testimony to be Your followers,
And may we keep a firm hope and truly live out our faith.
In Jesus' Name we pray, Amen.

Reflection

The Dead Don't Live Here

“**W**hy do you look for the living among the dead?” This was the question the women who went to the tomb to anoint Jesus’ body as per Jewish dead ritual. Whether they understood the question at that time or not, what stood out for me is defeat of death by a resurrected life. The power of a resurrected life is so obvious that to think of the resurrection as a miracle or mysterious occurrence will undermine the reality of a resurrected life lived in the flesh.

This resurrection of Jesus was before his ascension. Therefore, it is a resurrection of the body. The two men announcing Jesus’ resurrection saw it fitting to tell of Jesus’ being alive in the body, the very thing the women are in the tomb to anoint as part of the dead ritual.

We see that the ointments brought by the women to the tomb are of no use. They have to be of no use for everything that has to do with death does not apply to the newly resurrected space through Jesus. What is displayed clearly here are the two main extremes, life and death. What is for life cannot be used in death, and what is of death cannot be used in life.

Our world today is battered with death even though we preach life in Jesus through his resurrection. People continue to die, and we continue to look for things we are used to in the spaces of the dead. That is why humans goes around in a sort of merry-go-round without ending, looking for many answers in wrong places.

I want to bring to you the answer of the two angels, the dead don't live here. We are believers in Jesus. We are people of the resurrection. Our lives should portray a resurrected life, and it should bring freshness and life in full to those around us. Nothing in us should be of the dead. If Jesus is the Lord of the resurrection and is the centre of our lives, then people around us should find life in the life we exhibited.

Isaako Soliola Tunumosos,
Congregational Christian Church in Samoa

Prayer

- ✿ Peace on earth as our world is battered by war and hatred.
- ✿ A resurrected church across the world to be witness of God's justice.
- ✿ This Easter, may we experience the living Jesus.
- ✿ May we never, ever, look for the dead in the spaces of the living, or the living in the spaces of the dead

May



Scripture

Revelation 1:4 - 8

Third Sunday of Easter

Reflection

A Family Lineage

I always think of Christianity as a family – a big family of believers. If this is true then the saying that we are of one mind commends our common mission more than just a definition of who we are

As we are still in the spirit of Easter, it is good that we reflect on how our linkage to Jesus Christ, first born of the dead as John says in the text we read today, shine new light to how we ought to live. The reality of the matter is we cannot be careless in our living. To be linked to him who is the first born of the dead, meaning the first to be resurrected is more than a privilege, but a calling to faithful discipleship.

TIM is an opportunity to make new family members. Just like a family everyone in the household has different preferences, but somehow, we find the courage to make things work. There needs to be common grounds where we can operate otherwise our common faith and witness is futile.

The Revelation text speaks of the end times and what is to be expected. I am not speaking about visions and life after death. I am speaking about expecting to be art of the lineage of the firstborn of the dead, the ruler of the earth. In so aligning ourselves with Jesus we find the purpose for our mission – to display the family traits that is inclusive and unsparing in embracing. That is the family trait of the resurrected one. And we are part of that family. we are not called to envision what life is after death. We are called to see ourselves as members of this big family where Jesus is the firstborn of the dead, resurrected to show the world that goodness, truth, justice, and peace will always prevail. No matter what the world thinks and do, goodness will always prevail.

Joshua Iagata,
United Church in Papua New Guinea

Prayer

Lord, we pray for those who needs your justice and peace. In a world where many people display different reasons to be heard, to be seen, and be recognise, help us to fully show the power of a resurrected life, as we follow in all faithfulness our Lord Jesus, the firstborn of the dead into a full resurrected life.

Help us Lord to be good family members who are faithful to the family values of justice and peace. may we never move away from our convictions that he who is in us, is stronger than he who is without us. Give us resurrection power, so as to love without end. Amen.

Reflection

God is the Great Waiter

If someone invites you over and enquires "Who is God" or "How would you describe God?" What will be your response? The answer will depend on your age, status and context of your upbringing and environment. The atheists, the lay people, the poor, the children, the rich, theologians, and the weak will definitely provide various answers to describe who God is. This question, however, could not be comprehended easily, if the one seeking the answer will not take into consideration the importance of each response.

Today I want to highlight a child's response. The Sunday school teacher asked "Who is God?" Answers came from different perspectives. In regards to Psalm 23 verse 5a, one student replied. "God is the Waiter in a restaurant". Why did the child intentionally mention this? Is it because Psalm 23 verse 5a provides biblical typology of God being like a waiter in a restaurant? The preparation of a table [*mentioned in verse 5a*] commonly known as the responsibility of the waiter in a restaurant. Unbeknown to the child that her answer has biblical preference in Psalm 23 verse 5. Most probably the child have no intention to utilize Psalm 23 verse 5a as a hermeneutic lens to sum up the answer of who God is. A waiter in a restaurant" is worthy to express the Triune God.

Psalm 23:1-6 is one of David's song (hymn), sung by the Israelites which acknowledges the mighty acts of God in the midst of the communal life of His people. It talks about God's protection, providence, and guidance. David wrote this psalm in the late years of his life based on his extensive experience of being a shepherd. That experience who eventually led to him becoming the God's chosen shepherd of the Israelites. Apparently, David knew the role of a shepherd. He understood that the shepherd should have the potential to protect, guide, and the flock. Without a shepherd, the flock will be scatter. In the Psalm David metaphorically refer to role of the shepherd as a guide and protector to imply the greatness of God as a shepherd over his people.

This world is full of danger and has its problems, this is the reality of life. There are many things that bring danger to every aspect of our lives and everyone needs someone to comfort them from their troubles. From the perspective of a waiter in a restaurant, we understand that God is always our provider. We must believe in God's mighty act of mercy which guide and protect us. As we live amidst war, disasters, political tensions, a pandemic, family issues, community issues, climate change, and so forth, we are reminded of God being the Waiter of life. He keeps on moving with his might act of mercy, to flourish our Christian communal life with the table filled with an abundance of grace, where we can experience physical and spiritual satisfaction if we believe in Him whole-heartedly.

Rev Aratibin Mikaere, Kiribati Uniting Church

Prayer

Almighty God the Father of all providence, protection, and guidance, we praise and magnify your name. We thank you for being in our midst preparing the tables that provide us with a comfort zone. Help us in our journey to comprehend you in every aspect of our life, so that we may be strengthened, nourished in faith in light of our commitment to you. Amen.

15 May

5th Sunday of Easter

Scripture
John 13:31-35,
Key Verse: 34

Reflection

Loving One Another



I was raised by my grandfather in Kiribati and I remember how I used to go with my grandfather attending various village meetings and functions inside the ‘*Maneaba*’. The ‘*Maneaba*’ is a meeting hut that plays an important role in the lives of the Kiribati people. If you understand the meaning of the word ‘*Maneaba*’ you will also understand how the ‘*Maneaba*’ function in our Kiribati tradition. The word ‘*Maneaba*’ is literary shaped from two significant words. The first word is ‘*manea*’, which means accommodate, preserve or to take good care and the other word is ‘*aba*’ that can be translated as land or people. The ‘*Maneaba*’ is a society household where we discuss all matters concerning each household of the village or society to find solutions. It is also a place for society to celebrate special occasions such as welcoming visitors who are new in our society. Therefore, the ‘*Maneaba*’ becomes a space where we share laughter and sorrow, which builds a strong relationship with each other; and I believe that this is how we have love for one another.

God in His creation we are accommodated, the abundant of His blessings our lives are preserved by His creation, God saw all of this and it was good, so true, we have and will always be in the goodness of God’s care. It is through the love of God in Christ Jesus that we are saved, and we are commanded to imitate the love of God to love one another so that we might share joy in baring one’s burden and to be truly known as Christ disciples. This is how we should live in the household (*Maneaba*) created by God. It is love that reveals our identity as Christ’s disciples; without love for one another, we will never find peace with each other. It is from our own human desires that created chaos in the household (*Maneaba*) of God. The household (*Maneaba*) that God created is in need of our love to share in the household of God. We are now experiencing a pandemic where people are informed to follow health procedures for the safety of themselves and for others, but still, some are not following orders. War broke out between neighboring nations where many have lost their loved ones; families are in need of shelter, food and drink. We are living in a household (*Maneaba*) of God that is in need of our love for another to prevent and stop issues that are tearing apart the lives of those who live in the household (*Maneaba*) of God.

Rev Teari Karibarenga, Kiribati Uniting Church

Prayer

God of love we pray that you strengthen us in your love so that we may live in your Household and share peace and happiness with one another Amen.

Reflection

Peace



The verse I want to draw your attention to in our reading today is verse 8, where Jesus said to the lame man by the pool, “Get up, pick up your mat and walk.” This morning I read the newspaper and watched on television how helpless many in our world have become. Our world is battered with war, sickness, poverty, and the lack of peace. John 5:8 speak differently to how Jesu had mercy on the sick healing him of his condition. We, as followers of Christ must imitate Jesus and stand by the people in their hours of need.

How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news (Romans 10:15). My experience of Fiji, New Zealand, and South Korea is somewhat different during TIM2019. I only knew mission from my context. But TIM helped change my life now that I can apply some of the things I learn in my community. I understand many have contributed to the leadership formation and faith of my own preachers and teachers at home. The vastness of issues covered in this programme include cultural issues, social issues, theological challenges, mission in context, gendering God, global socio-political issues, global empirical structures, Kingdom of God on earth, faith and work, interfaith dialogue, missional issues, and transformative life.

In addition, my communication skills improved. I was able to communicate and made friends with people from other cultures and learning about their cultures too. I believe this programme is very meaningful and help develop a certain mindset.

Finally thanks to CWM for giving me the opportunity to join TIM2019. This programme shas really transformed me. I have gained a lot of knowledge through this programme. Many of what I’ve learned I am now applying in my ministry.

Sumon Mondol, Church of Bangladesh

Prayer

We pray for justice and peace in the whole world. And for the fullness of life for everyone in every village, towns, cities. Remove al that divides us and bring true harmony to our countries. We pray for skilled and unskilled workers, those in the agricultural sector, for those who defend our countries, for teachers, students, scientists, artists, and writers, and for all who influence the minds and hearts of many. We pray for the suffering, the poor, the hungry, the destitute and oppressed, the unemployment, the sick and the dying, and also for our governments. We also pray for the unity of all Christians in becoming witnesses of yours in this world. We pray for the church leaders, and your church. Amen.

29 May

Seventh Sunday of Easter
(Sunday in Ascension Tide)

Scripture
Acts 16:16-34,
Ps 97:1-12,
Rev 22:12-14, 16-17,20-21,
John 17:20-26

Reflection

The Lord Reigns

The Lord Reigns!

The Lord is King! Let the earth rejoice! Let the furthest is land be glad. (NLT).

The world we live in is a troubled world faced with unprecedented challenges such as HIV/AIDS, climate change, global warming, hunger, social economic disturbances where many economies around the globe have virtually collapsed and more recently, we have witnessed the emergence of the pandemic disease. COVID – 19 or Corona Virus Disease which was seen for the first time in the year 2019, and many other natural disasters such as torrential rains, drought in some parts of the world, etc..

The texts under consideration is all about God's sovereignty over all the nations and God is not only the God of Israel but God of the whole world. And His authority to judge all nations is based on the fact that only God can judge without prejudice. In order that God stand just, judgment must come on all people (Hebrews 9:27). No matter what situation we find ourselves and where ever we are we should not panic for God the Father and God the Son, Jesus – Christ, are firmly and fully in control of the creation and what is happening around it (Psalm 97: 1 – 6)

Therefore, all of us should rejoice because God is in control (Hebrews 1:3).

As we joyously celebrate one of the greatest and most spectacular events of human history, the Ascension of Jesus Christ into heaven, we need to constantly remind ourselves that:

- (a) God reigns and He is in full control of the universe (Psalm 97: 1 – 12).
- (b) God still intervenes in our every day situations and at the point of our needs. (Acts 16: 16 – 34).

For instance, in the Acts of Apostles chapter 16:16 - 34 we are given 3 situations.

- Situation #1 – the girl slave deliverance from demonic oppression which was fully exploited by her masters as she was telling fortunes (Acts 16:16-18).
- Situation #2 –the imprisonment of Paul and Silas! After delivering the girl slave from the bondage of telling fortunes and making money for her masters the two servants of the Lord Paul and Silas were severely beaten and thrown into prison. But even then, they did not stop from praising God and singing hymns to Him. And God caused a great earthquake and Paul and Silas were set free (Acts 16: 25 – 28).

• Situation #3: The jailer's salvation [Acts 16: 27 – 34] God intervened in the life of the jailer through Paul and Silas' imprisonment and their being set free after the sudden earthquake. However, the jailer was able to recognize the fact that these two men (Paul and Silas) were no ordinary men but messengers of God Himself. Realising his state of hopelessness, the jailer cried for his salvation. (v30).

Similarly, God, the Almighty God can save us from difficult situations such as the current pandemic disease COVID 19 through raising people who will be working tirelessly to find an effective and long-lasting vaccine against the pandemic disease and in any other extreme situations at His own time.

(c) God knows all our needs.

Being God incarnate, Jesus Christ was fully aware of the sense of emptiness and hopelessness of his disciples and those believers who would come after them. Hence Jesus realised their need for strength, unity and oneness in him and in one another in order for them to carry on effectively with the work which Jesus had began! He also knew that unity, oneness and love for one another were cardinal for the spreading of the Gospel to the world. He further realised that he was able to accomplish his work here on earth because he and God the Father are one. It is for this reason that he offered that prayer in John 17; 20 – 26.

(d) The Ascension also reminds us of two things:

• The fact that Jesus ascended into heaven he will come again as the Scripture clearly says (Acts 1: 9 – 11).

• The fact that when Jesus comes for the second time, he will come to judge the world. When Jesus comes in judgement:

(1) He will bring condemnation to those who have refused to turn away from their sinful way of life.

(2) However, His coming in judgment is always a blessing to the Saints of God.

(3) When He comes at the end of time, we, Christians, will be delivered out of the hostile environment in which we now dwell, for the environment of this present world will be terminated. The reward, therefore, that Jesus brings is relief from the environments in which we, Christians live that make it difficult for us to have peace, (Revelation 22:12 – 14, 16 – 17, 20 – 21).

To this end the second coming of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ gives us strength, and enhances our faith, confidence and hope in him for a better tomorrow and therefore this should make us alert and prepared all the time because when he says, "I am coming soon!" he simply means he is coming anytime. We should continue to pray for one another and support one another in good times and bad times. We should continue to do what is expected of us as believers.

Rev. Esther Milandu Mundemba, The United Church of Zambia

Prayer

Our God and our Redeemer in the person of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ we pray for your strengthening us in this trouble world as your children so that we will not loose heart because you are God who reigns with Jesus Christ.

Father help us to remember that you are in control of every event that takes place around us for it is according to your divine plans and you're strengthening us in this troubled world as your children so that we will not loose heart because you are God who reigns with Jesus Christ.

We also remember the body of Christ, the Church throughout the world especially members of the larger family C.W.M. wherever they are located to remain united in the body of Christ.

Father, we pray for the sick may they find healing in the mighty name of Jesus – Christ.

We remember before thee, victims of floods, wars, COVID 19, the homeless, the refugees, may they find comfort, and warmth in your present.

We thank you dear Lord for the discovery of the vaccine against the pandemic disease may it be effective and long lasting.

We also remember those who have lost their dear ones may you comfort them enough, surround them with your love and tender mercies in the might name of Jesus Christ, thy dear Son.

Amen.

June



05 June

Pentecost Sunday

Scripture

**Acts 2:1-21; Psalm 104:24-34, 35b;
Romans 8:14-17; John 14:8-17, (25-27).**

Reflection

Come, Holy Spirit

In the Acts reading, God uses the most spectacular ways to make his presence known: Violent wind, fire and of course the promised Holy Spirit which had finally come! So often in our lives we ask God to speak with clarity, to reveal himself clearly, to show us the way. We long for the proverbial 'writing in the clouds', or 'writing on the wall', we earnestly ask God to reveal to us that which we are asking for. And yet, God so seldom, if not rarely, maybe never, works as we request. We don't hear a loud voice, we don't see the writing on the wall, we remain unsure of the way forward, and often we even wonder if we have heard the voice of God. Then we remember the instruction contained in Psalm 46:10a to 'be still and know,' we recall how often Jesus went alone to a place to pray, we recall those words of Jesus to go into our rooms and pray (Matthew 6:6), and all this so we can hear.

It is often the 'gentle whisper', that 'small still voice', that we then hear. Somehow the Holy Spirit does not come to us in loud spectacular ways. The fact is, we have to be still, remain patient and listen for the Holy Spirit that appeared at Pentecost. What is amazing to me are the words in Acts 2:3 'tongues of fire....that came to rest on each of them', here we are reminded that nobody was excluded. What good news for us. We all get to experience the Spirit of God. The promised Holy Spirit, the powerful Holy Spirit, the comforter, the ever present Spirit of God is always with each one of us, even it not in a spectacular way. This inward presence reminds us of who we are and encourages us daily with the love of God (Romans 5:5) reminding us that we are God's children (Rom 8:16). Come, gentle Holy Spirit!

Rev Michelle Black, Presbyterian Church of Southern Africa

Prayer

Holy Spirit, come and rest on each of us. Come Holy Spirit and fill our hearts with the fire of your love. Holy Spirit guide us and comfort us. Spirit of God, be poured out within us so that we might testify about you. Come Holy Spirit and renew the face of the earth. In Jesus powerful name, Amen.

Reflection

The Holy Spirit as our Guide

On this Trinity Sunday we want to reflect on the Holy Spirit as our Guide. Trinity Sunday is the first Sunday after Pentecost that focuses on the unique relationship between the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Three persons but one God. The Gospel of St. John 16:12-15 begins with Jesus telling His disciples, “I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now” (12). In the preceding chapter Jesus said, “I have made known to you everything that I have heard from my Father.” One would ask the question then, how can Jesus have made known “everything” to the disciples and yet “Still have many things to say” to them? Jesus’s words in (16:12) cannot mean that there is new content to his revelation. There has got to be something else going on.

The clarity is here in verse 13 ***“But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all the truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come.”*** In other words, it won’t be Jesus doing the talking but the Spirit. The disciples “cannot bear” certain things now but will through the guidance of the Holy Spirit “into all truth”. We should try our best to seek guidance from the Holy Spirit in everything that we do. Allow the Spirit to guide, allow the Spirit to speak and allow the Spirit to declare truth.

The question we are left with is whether we will listen to the Spirit and be open to newer and deeper understandings of our faith and to the implications of Jesus’s revelation for us today. The internet, social media, and the 24-hour news cycle now give us a more immediate awareness of local, national, and global crises that challenge us for a Christian response, such as immigration and racial disparity in police treatment, to list just two examples. What is the Christian response to such realities? What response is truer and more faithful to Jesus’ revelation? Can we, like John, trust the Spirit to guide us in discerning what it means to live out Christian faith today?

Roy McGregor, United Church in Jamaica and the Cayman Island

Prayer

Guiding God, today we acknowledge you as the One who guides us to your truth. We pray that on this Trinity Sunday and onwards Your Holy Spirit will guide our feet, our decisions, our thoughts, everything we do. Stand by us Triune God, search our hearts we pray because we are your children.

Reflection

Our Sacrifice are not Futile

“I tell you the truth. Unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds.”

After three years of ministry some two thousand years ago, Jesus entered the city of Jerusalem. He was welcomed with praises, “Hosanna in the highest, blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.” Surprisingly, not long he was trialed, convicted, and nailed to the cross. But he rose from the dead as saviour.

From November 2004 to April 2005, I visited Taipei on a business trip for six months. During the first month I went from church to church. Rev. Dr. Jooseop Keum visited Taipei from the London CWM office and introduced me to a small church. On my first Sunday service the brothers and sisters welcomed me with warm hearts and hands. The hymns were so beautifully sung by a very small choir. The church makes me feel at home and I love everything about it.

This church used to belong to a political leader of the democratic party. It was in this house that assailants murdered his mother and two daughters. As a result of this atrocity and payment for blood shed the Gikong church was established on the same home.

The political situation in Taiwan mirrored a similar experience I had during the democratic movement as an undergraduate in the 1980s in Korea. The Spring of 2005 my business travel came to an end. But I will always remember the sad history of the Gikong church. Like Jesus' resurrection we adore the presence of God in the Gikong church during every Easter.

When back home and reflecting on my TIM experience, I introduced Gikong to my home church. Oh, for seventeen years the two churches have developed a sister-like relationship with each other. Next April, I plan to visit Gikong church. Due to COVID-19 I cancelled my travels. However, indebted to CWM's invitation to join the struggle and pain of the Gikong church, I will surely visit again.

Deacon Byunghee Jang, The Presbyterian Church of Korea



Prayer

Jesus my Lord, you suffered pain on the cross. You shed your blood to revive the life in me. Like the sacrifice of a family in Taipei forty years ago, you built your church and made us witnesses to our neighbours over and over again. Oh Lord, redeem and save us. Take us by the hand and lead us. There are many Gikong-like churches around the world – have mercy and bestow your favour upon them, and let the history of your resurrection spread everywhere. Amen.

Reflection

Live and be Saved

Psalm 30 is considered the Psalm for the day of HANUKKAH. Life itself is full of mixed emotions, circumstances and complications. Sin is the new normal, we try to live to people's expectations and guide life with our emotions.

Psalm 30:3 "You brought me up from the grave, O Lord. You kept me from falling into the pit of death" upon reading this, the verse speaks of what the resurrection of Christ did and continues to do for all humanity-if they have received Him whole heartedly.

Everyday I am reminded that Jesus died on the cross, our sins died with Him and so as our normal living habits, when He was buried, so were our sins and when He rose from the dead and all our sins were washed away and we were made new! In this life, there's a saying "there is nothing new under the sun". But, 2 Corinthians 5:17 contradicts with this saying and it states "For I am a new creation because of Christ" and many others who have accepted Him and are heading down the path of accepting Him as their Lord and Saviour, have the same privilege.

Sin will always lead to death, (Romans 6:23- For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord)

It is because of Him that sin no longer has a hold on our lives and this warrants glory to the Father and daily celebration here on earth, which the Psalmist addresses in the next few verses of the scripture. In this life, let no evil win for Christ Jesus won victory when He rose from the dead and is within us forever.

Temukisa Tuliaupupu, Congregational Christian Church in Samoa

Prayer

Jesus Thank you for I am a new creation, we have a clean slate; and a new beginning. Lord You have made this possible. All that held us back before, our past pain and struggle as well as traumas no longer have authority over our lives. The old has past, the new has begun. We now have the opportunity to become more like who created us. Teach us that there's no more fear, no more hate and no more worldly pain. Lord we pray for lost souls and declare that we can do nothing apart from You.

Bless Your Name Jesus

Amen



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