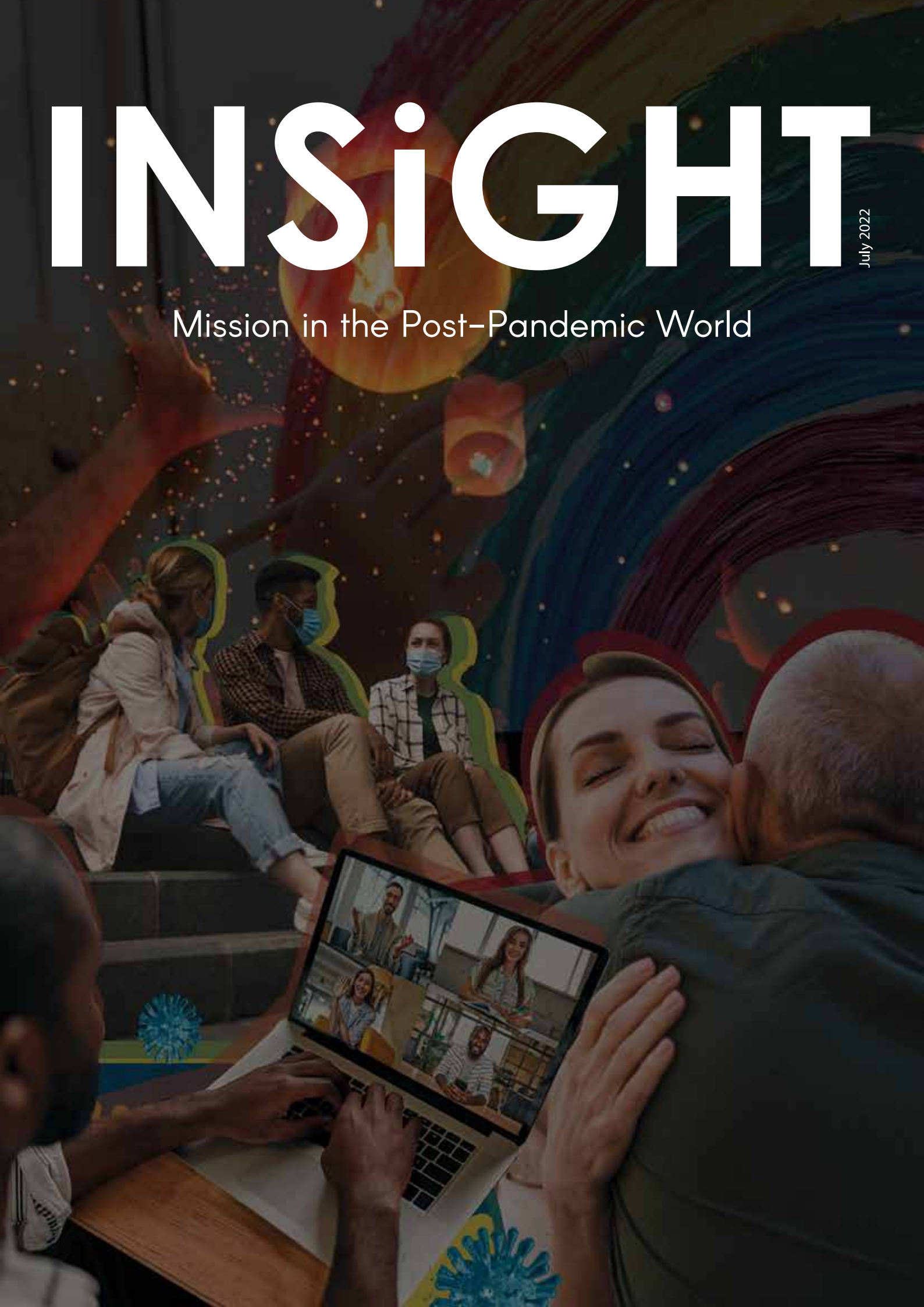
INSiGHT

July 2022

Mission in the Post-Pandemic World



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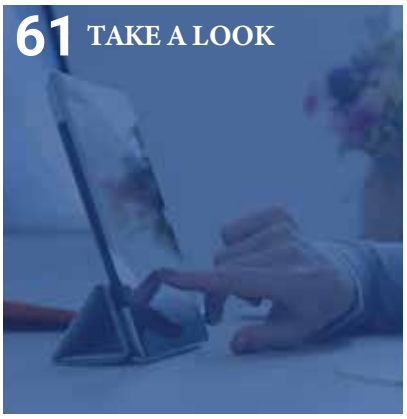


67 SEEN & HEARD

CWM - A Community of Jubilee

Leviticus 25:8-10

Count off seven sabbath years—seven times seven years—so that the seven sabbath years amount to a period of forty-nine years. Then have the trumpet sounded everywhere on the tenth day of the seventh month; on the Day of Atonement sound the trumpet throughout your land. Consecrate the fiftieth year and proclaim liberty throughout the land to all its inhabitants. It shall be a jubilee for you; each of you is to return to your family property and to your own clan.

Luke 4:18-19

The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.

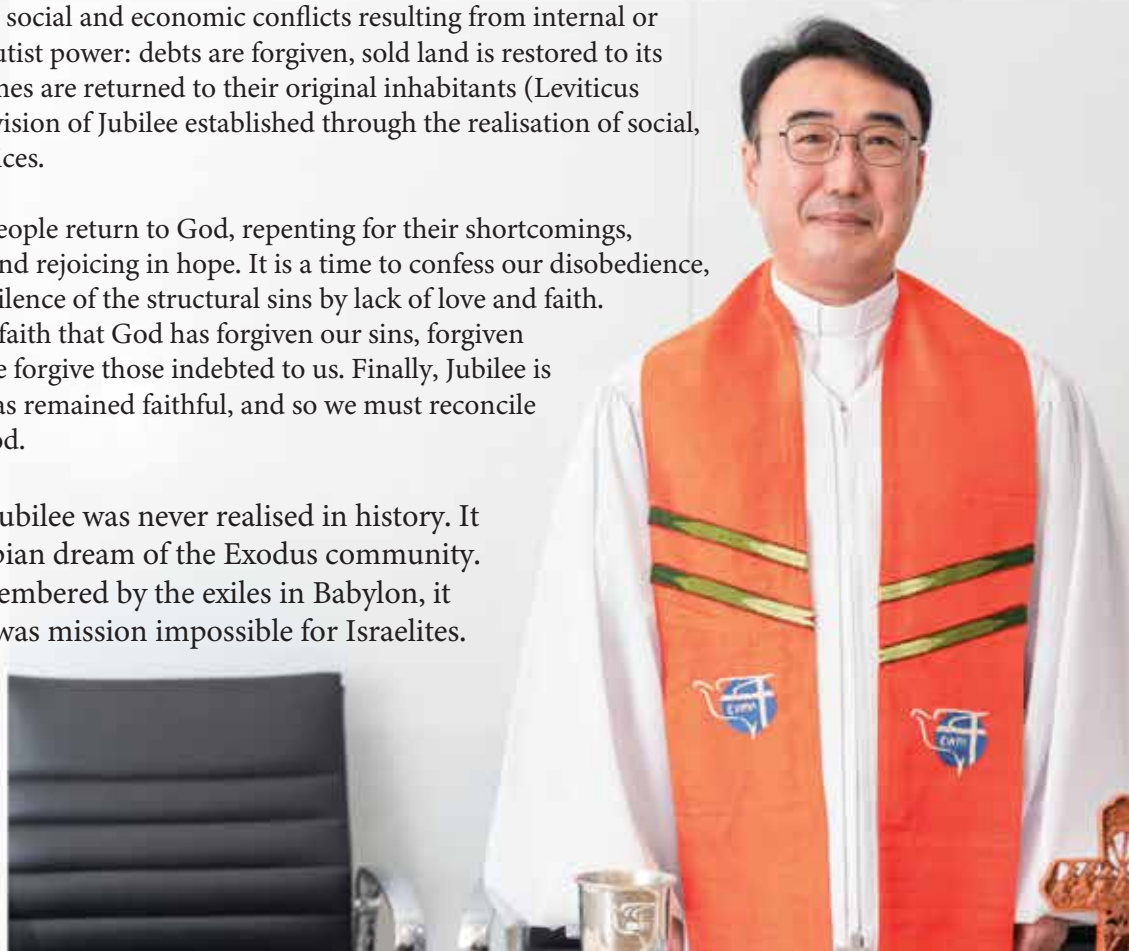
Dear sisters and brothers in Christ,
Greetings of Peace and grace in the name of the Triune God!

The Jubilee year is the fiftieth year following the completion of 49 years, a cycle of seven sabbatical years (Leviticus 25:8-10). The Jubilee year is a "year of liberation." The proclamation of the Jubilee year is an act of God's people, which reveals their faithfulness in keeping God's sovereignty over history and in keeping God's covenant.

The Jubilee Year is a time during which the covenant community of unity and peace is restored through the establishment of shalom based upon God's justice. This is seen in the liberation of the enslaved through the overcoming of all social and economic conflicts resulting from internal or external repression and absolutist power: debts are forgiven, sold land is restored to its original tillers, and seized homes are returned to their original inhabitants (Leviticus 25:11-55). The shalom is the vision of Jubilee established through the realisation of social, economic, and ecological justices.

Jubilee is the time when the people return to God, repenting for their shortcomings, recovering of righteousness, and rejoicing in hope. It is a time to confess our disobedience, divisions, greed, hatred, and silence of the structural sins by lack of love and faith. Jubilee is a time to renew our faith that God has forgiven our sins, forgiven our debts, and a time when we forgive those indebted to us. Finally, Jubilee is a time that reminds us God has remained faithful, and so we must reconcile with one another and with God.

Unfortunately, the Law of Jubilee was never realised in history. It remained merely as an utopian dream of the Exodus community. Although it was briefly remembered by the exiles in Babylon, it soon disappeared again. It was mission impossible for Israelites.



This is why God has decided to incarnate into the world to teach and model the life of Jubilee. To proclaim that it is mission possible! Jesus came to the world to live out the mission of Jubilee. Jesus proclaimed the Jubilee as his mission: "The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor." (Luke 4:18-19)

Therefore, for us, Jubilee is not merely a utopian dream in heaven but indicative of a historical vision that the Reign of God is entering into this world from the eschaton. Affirming life in all its fullness is Jesus Christ's ultimate concern and mission (John 10:10), and also, it is our mission of CWM as his disciples.

As the world opens up after over two years of the Covid-19 global pandemic, various socio-political and economic inequalities are also coming to the surface, exposing the multiple forms of oppression, deeply rooted corruption, greed and structures that are in place to keep certain sections of the people vulnerable. As a result, the powerful are growing into more powerful, and the vulnerable are plunging into deeper vulnerability.

On the other hand, the ongoing wars and military occupations in various parts of the world, the accumulation of modern destructive weapons, and the exploitation of the earth and its resources continuously prove that the global society is at a fatal threat. These scars are so deep that only the power of God's Spirit can heal and reconcile the humanity and creation.

It is in the midst of these challenges we met together during the Annual Members' Meeting last month as the representatives of the CWM member churches. However, the gathering was not only as individual representatives of their respective churches but also as partners of churches in mission, representing together the Council for World Mission. What then kind of community are we? I would say we are a community of Jubilee!

Mission in the post-Covid 19 context requires the rebooting and rebuilding of our community with a transformed understanding of life in its fullness for all. As envisioned in the bible, such a vision of a transformed society is nothing but a "New Heaven and New Earth," the home of righteousness. It is also the home of the right relationship between humanity and creation, a just oikonomia that affirms the economy of life.

The un-negotiable identity of CWM is a global community of churches in mission. CWM is neither an independent mission society nor a donor agency. It is an equal partnership of churches to carry out God's mission (Missio Trinitatis) together in the contexts. Therefore, the member churches will be the primary agents in carrying out the new vision and implementing the new strategy, not as individuals but as a community.

The new CWM Strategy Framework aims to enable the communities to live out the New Heaven and New Earth by responding to the call to radical discipleship in the midst of this wounded and grieving world. As the disciples, we follow that Christ's mission is to give life to the suffering people and creation. However, we will not rely on gold and silver. We will not bring our own plans and desires first. Holy Spirit, God the life-giver, will empower us to join in the Spirit's mission of life and renews the whole creation. We will witness together through our rejoicing the hope in Christ.

Covid-19 reminds us that we cannot go back to the old lifestyle and systems that brought forth the pandemic and deeply wounded the world. We must commit ourselves together in humility and hope to the Mission of the Holy Spirit God who recreates all and reconciles all. Through the Holy Spirit, God affirms the vision of the reign of God, "Behold, I create new Heavens and new Earth" (Isaiah 65:17).

Dear sisters and brothers, we are called as the community of Jubilee. The Holy Spirit empowers us to live into the missional vision of the Year of Lord's favour.

The Spirit of the Lord on us, let us rise to life together everywhere, like the bamboo trees after monsoon rain in Chin Hills!

The Spirit of the Lord on us, let us build the life-flourishing communities everywhere, like the Christian students who work in Dharavi Slum, Mumbai!

The Spirit of the Lord on us, let us transform the world, like the black nuns fighting against the evil of racism in Chicago!

The Spirit of the Lord on us, inspire us to see you in the places that hide you and summon us to witness at your side.

"Receive the Holy Spirit" (John 20:22)
Let us build CWM together as a community of Jubilee!

Rev. Dr Jooseop Keum
General Secretary
Council for World Mission

AT A GLANCE

CWM General Secretary, Rev. Dr Jooseop Keum Delivered a Keynote to the Assembly of International Association for Mission Studies

"In the midst of agony, despair, and cries of life in this pandemic-stricken world, it is our mission as transforming disciples is to seek alternative values, ways of life, and communities, to reveal shalom in God's kingdom on earth by the power of the Holy Spirit" says Rev. Dr Jooseop Keum, the General Secretary for the Council for World Mission (CWM).

In his keynote at 15th Assembly of the International Association of Mission Studies (IAMS) on 18 July 2022 in Sydney, Australia, Dr Keum, called on the missiologists and theologians all over the world to embrace the transforming discipleship as a radical proposal to live out the mission concepts of shalom and sangsaeng in the current global context.

Speaking about today's context of the world, he highlighted that the Covid-19 is not only a medical disaster but also a human-made social, political, economic and ecological disaster that resulted in the deaths of countless lives. Reflecting on the prevalent systemic greed, sharp economic disparities, environmental destruction, war economies, supremacist ideologies, and exploitation of vulnerable people, he expressed his grave concern that only the fittest are privileged for survival in this world of moral decadence. Rising some pertinent questions on the nature of God's mission, discipleship in today's context, he called upon the mission theologians and scholars to place justice, equality, and liberation at the heart of Christian mission, and apply the concepts of shalom and sangsaeng as a way of transforming discipleship in the midst of a wounded creation and humanity.

Expounding on the biblical concept of shalom and Asian concept of sangsaeng, in relation to the African concept of Ubuntu, Dr Keum hoped that these biblical, Asian, and African concepts of life could provide an alternative way of theological exploration. Highlighting the importance of human beings' co-existence with the nature and all the creatures in it, he said, "In a world where bats cannot live, humanity cannot survive too! Therefore, bats and humanity are in the relationship of sangsaeng, living together." He further said that to live out such concepts of life, we need to embrace the transforming discipleship and put a theology of cross into practice.

Dr Keum concluded his keynote by emphasizing that despite all the challenges and vulnerabilities, we can still take strides in God of mission who empowers and gives us life in its fullness. Therefore, our mission as transforming disciples is to proclaim the hope of shalom.

The participants IAMS Assembly have thanked Dr Keum for his profound keynote speech with prophetic voice as well as deep missiological vision and articulation. Prof. Bokyoung Park, Vice-President, who chaired the session, expressed her deepest gratitude for the profound keynote on behalf of IAMS. Inaugurated in Driebergen, The Netherlands, in 1972, IAMS meets once every four years for its General Assembly bringing together hundreds of scholars as the global academic society of missiology from various countries, denominations and disciplines to share the outcomes of missiological researches and to discern God's mission in the context of contemporary challenges. This year, despite the pandemic and its' challenges in travelling, over 100 participants gathered together in person, while many others have joined the sessions online.

Under the leadership of Rev. Dr Paul Kollman, the President of IAMS and the team, the sessions will continue until 11 July 2022 at Morling College, Sydney on the theme, "Powers, Inequalities and Vulnerabilities: Mission in a Wounded World."

GEM School grounds economic justice biblically

The first face-to-face GEM School held since 2019 has opened in Berlin, Germany, with a focus on ecological and feminist economics.

The Ecumenical School on Governance, Economics, and Management for an Economy of Life—GEM School—is a program within the New International Financial and Economic Architecture (NIFEA) project.

"The pandemic underlined yet again the need for a new economic and financial architecture that meets the needs of all people regardless of class, gender, or race and sustains the whole world of creation," said Isabel Phiri, Deputy General Secretary of the World Council of Churches (WCC).

"In particular we are highlighting feminist economics and ecological economics as they are particularly critical as we reflect on how to build a different financial and economic architecture," said Athena Peralta, WCC Programme Executive for Economic and Ecological Justice.

The 30 participants from more than one dozen countries are ecumenical and church leaders, justice advocates, economic activists, ministers, and theological students.

"GEM School provides us with a concrete way to learn from each other together—theologians and lay, economic experts and social advocates, multi-generationally," said Sivin Kit, Program Executive for Public Theology & Interreligious Relations with the Lutheran World Federation.

"The GEM School recognizes that our economics has to be contextual. A lot of our NIFEA work is rightly focused on providing a critique on our advocacy. We also need to see where these alternatives can take root and create change," said Peter Cruchley, Mission Secretary for Mission Development with the Council for World Mission.

As part of its contextual focus, students visited the Brot für die Welt offices in Berlin, as well as with two women's advocacy organizations, Women in Exile & Friends and Respect Berlin.

"Social holiness and personal holiness have to come together, without neglecting the hard work in the political arena to effect economic and social change," said Bishop Rosemarie Wenner, Geneva Secretary of the World Methodist Council.

Prof Dr Isabel Phiri speaking

Sessions included introductions to feminist economics; ecological economics, including de-grown and post-growth approaches; foundations for global financial and economic transformation; and advocacy tools for economic justice, using the Zacchaeaus Tax Campaign as a case study.

Bible studies during the week were on "Land, Labour, Capital, and Technology" and "New Creation and New Earth."

"I think it's fantastic that we're able to meet in person from so many places from around the world. I'm very curious to learn from your perspectives and your contexts," said student Helena Funk from the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Saxony.

"I am looking forward to absorbing as much as I can and then to apply it when I return home, along with building networks here to tap into to expand the work of God," said student Westonio Sarien from Ebenezer Congregational Church in South Africa.

"In the US, we have spent a lot of time on focusing ministry as therapy, just to help people deal with the woes of a global broken narrative instead of working on the broken narrative itself. We live in this narrative that was designed by a handful of white men, and we need a narrative that was designed by God," said student Russell Meyer from the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

In welcoming remarks, Peter Jörgensen, of Religions for Peace Europe and a Baptist pastor in Berlin, noted that both "ecumenical" and "economic" come from the same Greek root—oikos—and said that "ecumenical" in German means a common house. "You will learn how an economy could be shaped to care for the common house so that all people can find protection and care in it, can live well in it; in other words, can lead a good life in this house that is common for all," he said.
The GEM School began with a session on "Economic Justice at the Heart of Faith."

"God measures societies by what they do to the poorest and marginalized in a society," said Metropolitan Geevarghese Mor Coorilos, Syrian Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch and All the East, in his keynote. "An economy of life is one that considers the welfare of the poor as the basic index of the economy. It puts the sovereignty of God above those of mammon and money."

"Ecological and economic science are always connected," said Thandi Soko De Jong in her keynote address. "A central role must be given to God's shalom. Wanton consumerism should not carry pride and prestige. The earth should thrive as we thrive. This should be our attitude towards God's creation."

The GEM School ran from 4-8 July 2022 in Berlin, Germany.

NIFEA is a cooperative effort by the Council for World Mission, Lutheran World Federation, World Communion of Reformed Churches, World Council of Churches, and World Methodist Council. It is supported by funding from Otto per Mille through the World Communion of Reformed Churches.

Council for World Mission (CWM) envisions mission as digital networking, launches broadcast studio

Council for World Mission (CWM) held its bi-monthly All-Staff Meeting on 19 May 2022, an initiative by the CWM General Secretary Rev. Dr Jooseop Keum for staff around the world to gather virtually and receive updates and presentations, and be edified by a keynote guest lecture on mission. Organised by CWM Communications Team, this meeting commenced with an opening prayer by Rev. Dileep Kumar Kandula, CWM Mission Secretary – General Secretariat & Communications (Interim), who spearheaded this event.

Following this, the Communications team screened a video produced in-house to equip colleagues on "Modern Digital Technologies: Opportunities and Threats". As part of CWM's vision of doing mission on digital spaces, the team briefly covered current technological trends from Metaverse, NFTs, and cryptocurrencies, as well as opportunities they provided and threats they posed - a growing digital divide, deepfakes, scams, and privacy and security concerns they precipitate.

Cognisant of emerging digital trends and as part of CWM's efforts towards digital mission and ministry, a broadcast studio in the CWM office which will facilitate recording, editing, streaming and producing audio-visual content was officially launched and dedicated earlier in the day. Staff viewed a video tour of the new CWM Studio, which will provide them with the tools and space to creatively express CWM's vision and mission, and envisage reaching out to her member churches and beyond.

In the next segment of the meeting, the team engaged staff in discussion on chosen topics, anticipating the need to accompany member churches in doing mission in digital networking. One group was in dialogue about how to strategise communications in mission and ministry in view of opportunities and threats brought about by modern digital technologies.

In view of the unavoidability of these digital trends, opportunities and threats, another group spoke about the issue of misinformation and fake news, and acknowledged the opportunities that come with advanced technology. For example, academic courses can be offered and taught online without the need for institutions. In fact, CWM is working to offer an online degree on mission studies.

In the area of privacy and security concerns that inevitably arise, another group highlighted the importance of vigilance in one's online presence. On one hand, they were aware and wary of the risks involved, such as theft of their financial information or identity. On the other hand, the group recognised benefits such as keeping track of their family members' locations and communicating with them wherever they are located in the globe, and some conceded that targeted advertising can suit their individual needs.

Another set of colleagues candidly shared about their daily screentime and spoke about how it impacts their communication with their family and friends. Their digital habits and usage time varied across a spectrum, from 12 hours of screentime or less. For some, screentime equates connecting with loved ones who are physically apart, while others are intentional about striking a balance between screen time and downtime with loved ones, and setting healthy screentime limits for their children.

Finally, invited by CWM, Archpriest Prof. Dr Daniel Buda, Dean of the Orthodox Theological Faculty, "Lucian Blaga" University, Sibiu, Romania spoke on the Russia-Ukraine conflict, and the Orthodox Church's response to the peace efforts.

The meeting concluded with a collective awareness of CWM's vision of an evolving, digital mode of missions in today's world.

Young People in TEF Webinar Call for Collective Engagement in Peacebuilding Efforts in Asia

The Presbyterian Church in Taiwan (PCT) has conducted the Taiwan Ecumenical Forum (TEF) Youth Webinar on Tuesday, 26 April 2022, at 8:00 PM Taiwan time with the theme, "The Neo-Cold War: The Resurgence of the Geopolitics of Global Empires in (North) East Asia". Over 80 participants from across the world have participated, collectively discerned, and engaged in conversations with four young panellists from Japan, Taiwan, South Korea and Thailand. Ms Nancy Lin, the Programme Secretary, Ecumenical Relations Committee of the PCT and Executive Secretary of the TEF, opened the webinar with the words of welcome.

In his welcoming remarks, Rev. Dr Jooseop Keum, General Secretary of the Council for World Mission (CWM) and co-convener of the TEF, stressed the role of young people in the peacebuilding efforts in Northeast Asia and beyond. Reflecting on the ongoing war between Ukraine and Russia and its economic and security implications on Asian countries, he expressed, "In order to achieve peace, we can no longer depend on the powerful nations and fall prey to geopolitics. Instead, we must empower ourselves and build our future based on peace and justice." Affirming the significant role of young people in peacebuilding, he exhorted, "It is high time for churches and organisations to engage young people in peacebuilding efforts ensuring their voices and opinions are heard."

Rev. Dr Chris Ferguson, former General Secretary of the World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC) and co-convener of the TEF, outlined the context of the webinar and introduced the panellists. The young panellists, in their presentations, have passionately expressed their concerns about the lack of space for their voices and opinions. Ms Nonoka KUZE, an activist from the Sapporo Centre for Gender Equality in Japan, while expressing her disappointment in the socio-cultural practices that hinder the freedom of young women in the society, she articulated her hope in young people's potential in peacebuilding. She opined that cultural exchange among young people beyond the borders and effective use of social networks could bring them together. Challenging the popular understanding of the cold war or neo-cold war and their interpretations given by the Western/European nations, Ms A-Young Moon, a peace activist from PEACEMOMO from South Korea, raised several pertinent questions for the participants to reflect critically. Addressing a narrow understanding of security, she stressed the need to challenge the state authorities who are monopolising threat interpretations and to diversify the security discourses making people at the centre of their security.

Analysing from a different perspective, Mr Bin-Jou Liao, a PhD candidate in Political Science at National Taiwan University, presented an analytical framework that captured the origin of conflicts and asserted the importance of doing theology at the heart of people's conflicts. He reiterated the role of the Church as a guardian of the weak and oppressed in promoting social and economic justice. The final panellist, Mr Sippachai Kunnuwong, a Communications Specialist at Fortify Rights in Thailand, spoke on the Thailand-China relations and revealed how China led the path for creating authoritarian governments. Observing the recent youth movements in several parts of Asia, he also expressed a strong hope for the youth movements in the resistance against the authoritarian governments.

The participants further engaged in a rich conversation facilitated by Ms Monica Biswas from Bangladesh, affirming the role of young people in peacebuilding efforts. The group discussion reiterated the Church's responsibility in providing a space for young people to capitalize on their creative initiatives and efforts to stand up against authoritarian regimes and to stand for the weak and oppressed in achieving peace and justice for all.
The TEF Youth Webinar is especially significant in the context of ongoing tensions in the Taiwan-China relations aggravated by the war between Ukraine and Russia. In her closing remarks, Ms Nancy Lin thanked all the participants and encouraged everyone to continue engaging with the peacebuilding efforts in Asia.

EAST ASIA REGIONAL ASSEMBLY

by Stephen Chia

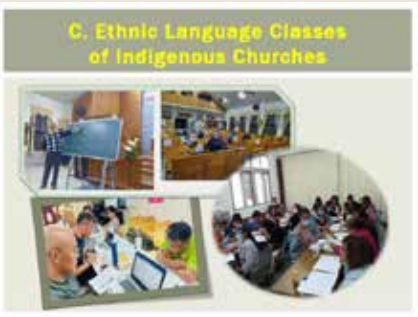
The CWM East Asia Regional Assembly was held online from 24-25 May 2022 between 10:00am to 4:30pm via Zoom to facilitate mutual sharing and collective discernment on emerging issues of the Region. Joining the meeting were delegates from the 6 East Asia member churches, the resource persons, Prof. Francis Yip, Dr Natalie Lin and CWM Partners- in-Mission (PIM) Rev. Dr Li Hau-Tiong and Mrs. Li Hsu Su-Fen.

DAY ONE (24 May) began with the CWM General Secretary, Rev. Dr Jooseop Keum, bringing opening greetings to the delegates. He shared about the great turmoil seen in East Asia, unprecedented in these times. With military operations, inequalities and the global pandemic, as well as the conflict in Ukraine felt worldwide, peace has been elusive. The political situation in Taiwan and Hong Kong as well as the current situation in Korea have been challenging. Myanmar's military dictatorship still stands. In these broken times, we are to witness peace and reconciliation in Christ, making them our mission. We ought to embark on a pilgrimage of peace and justice as it brings us fullness of life. In Christian tradition, peace goes along with harmony and restoration. Hence, it is natural for us to desire to cultivate peace in our communities in order for life to flourish. Rev. Dr Keum invited delegates to envision a region where neighbours are not afraid of one another and live together harmoniously.

After a round of greetings and introductions in the delegates' own languages, Prof. Francis Yip (Director and Associate Professor, Divinity School of Chung Chi College, Chinese University of Hong Kong) delivered the Keynote Address, The Church in a Post-COVID World. He urged the region to share both the sufferings and emerging joys of the pandemic. Though the world is moving back to the new normal, the trauma of the pandemic still remains. Prof. Yip challenged churches to consider how to actualize church ministry to reach those impacted by the pandemic. Mental health, social injustice, domestic violence and economic issues have all greatly risen since the onset of COVID-19, exacerbated by widening class gaps, the war in Ukraine and high inflation rates. The ecological and political fronts have seen simultaneous improvements and deteriorations. Church life has experienced various levels of impact due to the online-physical conundrum. Ongoing theological debates persist concerning the nature of sacraments when they are administered online.

Prof. Yip examined the ministry of Jesus (quoting from Matthew and John) as a biblical response to the pandemic. Like Jesus, churches of today are still called to teach, preach, heal and exorcise. The main slant of this ministry should be the restoration of the image of the triune God, which implies a sense of dignity, community and fellowship with nature. In the economic sense, humanity should precede economic profits and gain. On the political front, we should be reminded that all the anti-pandemic measures and political policies are made for humans and not the other way round.

During the ensuing plenary discussion, PCK shared on worship as mission, and how a focus on worship is needed in a time such as this. PCT touched on its churches in urban and rural areas, and how due to the lack of online capacities, the life of the rural churches in this post- pandemic times has been destabilized and affected. PCS discussed their overseas support during pandemic times, including support for Ukraine and local/foreign missionaries. Some PCS congregations have also opened their doors for the homeless. PCM spoke about the decreasing numbers in churches primarily due to the ongoing political and military situation, and also the importance of pastors and ministers to be digitally literate and equipped for post- COVID ministry. GPM shared about their post-pandemic journey and current transition from online services back into physical ones. HKCCCC discussed the issue of whether Hong Kong should align with China's zero-COVID policy or follow the rest of the world in going endemic.



During the Member Church Sharing section, PCT presented on challenges such as youth leaving the church, aging population and political language policies. PCT has also been active in online Christian education ministry to Sunday School children and pastoral care. As part of their MSP-4 project, PCT has been engaging in developing elderly-friendly congregations, contextual bible study groups for youth, ethnic language classes for indigenous groups and strengthening communal congregations through community mission models. PCT's other activities in the society include community work, collaboration with other churches and aid for Ukraine.

PCS began by narrating a brief history and overview of the church. Sharing its lessons learnt in pedagogy (Trinity Theological College), PCS shared the challenges of learning and utilizing zoom for online courses due to the lack of face-to-face interactions. Theologically, the issue of partaking communion remotely was brought up. An observation made was that churches became theologically flexible in light of COVID restrictions, a testament to how the global church survived the last 2,000 years. In its public witness, local congregations worked quickly to comply with pandemic restrictions. Local Christians stepped up to deliver food to migrant workers in lockdown, and assisted to set up COVID care facilities.

PCM shared that the ongoing military coup has resulted in Myanmar becoming a failed state, resulting in bank restrictions, media control, travel restrictions, regular shootings, electricity shortages, drug abuse and a crippled economy. PCM has responded to the COVID-19 situation by putting in place a COVID response team providing healthcare, aid packages and funeral services. The supporting of internally displaced people (IDP) remains a key missional priority. Food was also supplied to churches and political prisoners of the military regime. As part of their MSP-4 project, PCM has conducted awareness and training programmes on drug and alcohol abuse, as well as tailoring training and nurse helper training.

During the Wrapping Up session of the first day, PCT discussed the possibility for CWM to create more space for women and youth through their programmes, while GPM affirmed the generational gap issue facing churches (that separates the youth and older generation), calling upon CWM intervention for this matter.

DAY TWO (25 May) began with CWM PIMs Rev. Dr Li Hau-Tiong and Mrs. Li Hsu Su-Fen leading Worship and Prayer on the topic of Jesus' Mission and Ministry in the Book of Matthew. Starting with his own experience of catching COVID-19, he described common challenges in the post-COVID world. Quoting from the book of Matthew, Rev. Dr Li expounded on Jesus' ministry of healing the sick and poor. The priorities of the church ought to include disciple-making, baptism and teaching. The session concluded with The Lord's Prayer in the delegates' own languages.

The Thematic Reflection was led by Dr Natalie Lin on the topic of Worship and Spirituality in a Post-COVID Church. Retelling the story of the Road to Emmaus in Luke, Dr Lin spoke of the two men's time with Jesus that led to an identity crisis and questions about their faith and response.

These two men experienced the new life radiated by the risen Christ, which played a part in their personal transformation and spiritual formation. Dr Lin stressed that worship is to be translated into an attitude of awe and trust in our relationship with God. It is not simply about liturgy but rather a spiritual pilgrimage of encountering Jesus, reflecting the fullness of the gospel. Through worship, we are drawn away from a self-centred life into a community of Christ.

The ensuing plenary discussion saw GPM present about the lack of a physical component and environment in online worship. Worship is important but simply a supplement to God's word. HKCCCC described how liturgy is not the most important to a uniting church like theirs, but rather simply a tool to help people encounter God. For PCM, churches in Yangon are implementing online services. The current military situation eclipses COVID-19 in terms of severity. Their communication with overseas partners has also been hampered because of the military restrictions. PCK delegates felt that worship does not need to be confined to any specific framework or liturgy. Each individual's worship may or may not fully reflect the gospel, hence the responsibility of the church to provide corporate direction to the members. PCS church members enjoyed the ease of online services but very quickly felt the disconnection and need for in-person interaction. PCT observed the loneliness and anxiety resulting from the pandemic, resulting in the need for church to provide peace and love, even in simple ways.

Church with soldiers

During the Member Church Sharing section, PCK presented on the COVID-19 situation in South Korea and the changes in society and church the pandemic caused. Some of the challenges Korean churches are currently facing include restoring the original nature of the church, restoring the church's status and reflecting on the gospel. PCK has collaborated with soldiers, migrants, persons living with disabilities and also participated in ecological activities and aid to North Korea. PCK is currently seeking policy developments for revival of local churches, as well as emphasizing youth education. In response to a question during the plenary discussion, PCK revealed that they are also losing youth in church. However, locals are trying ways to fill the gaps through youth programmes and other initiatives.

HKCCCC shared that challenges began way before COVID-19, presenting themselves in the form of political disunity and controversy involving the influence of China. Notable events include the June 2019 anti-extradition law protests and the COVID-19 pandemic and its ensuing restrictions to movement. HKCCCC pastors mediated and put their faith on the frontline of the protests. Local congregations also offered open spaces as rest areas for unarmed protestors and signed appeals to repeal the government's "riot" accusations. HKCCCC's COVID-19 interventions consist of aid package distribution, visiting the homeless and starting online classes. The church has been facing loss of pastors and the country experiencing mass migration waves out of Hong Kong.

Pastors mediated and witnessed our faith on front lines of conflicts

GPM introduced the second phase of its Church Without Walls plan, which hit a roadblock because of COVID-19. The concept of the plan is to move beyond its own walls and live out faith and do outreach and evangelism in the community. After an overview on the history and organizational structure of GPM, the Presbyterian Digital School was introduced. Digital courses, Sunday School learning, Presbyterian History and other training programmes will be offered on this platform. A major challenge to GPM and Malaysia in general is Islamization. The indigenous ministry is an important part of GPM's work that aims to build up a generation of Christians among the indigenous and stem the tide of Islamization.

In the final section, The Way Forward, member churches name several urgent mission priorities in the Region as follows:

GPM raised cross-cultural, cross-linguistic missions as a mission priority for their church to equip believers who will return to their home countries to build bridges with the local communities.

PCS shared about the national white paper on religious harmony, which restricts local evangelical work. However, they see the need to think beyond traditional evangelism to continue local mission work. PCS' focus is also on the regional mission consultation involving partner nations such as Laos, Cambodia, Thailand, Vietnam and Indonesia.

HKCCCC stressed their historical ties with the CCC in China and their desires to cooperate with them again, which were hindered by COVID-19. In addition, the Church will always need to work closely with the government to ensure smooth operation of their schools. HKCCCC raised the training of new leaders as pastors as an emerging regional priority.

PCK raised theological reflection on the 4th industrial revolution and its ramifications (over- reliance on online services) as an urgent missional issue for the church. Empires and systems of powerful nations was lifted up as a missional concern for the region.

PCM spoke of caring for internally-displaced people near the border regions as a local missional issue. Due to the lack of media and external support, a regional, caring community and network will be a source of invaluable support to PCM.

PCT shared about identity in the multi-cultural, multi-ethnic Taiwanese society as an emerging issue. A regional priority was for governments to encourage education in regional mother tongues in order to embrace our God-given diversity.

The CWM 2022 East Asia Regional Assembly was concluded with a closing prayer led by Rev. Phua Chee Seng of the PCS.

CWM Annual Members Meeting calls for Transformative Discipleship in a Wounded World

CWM Directors, member church delegates, guests and mission secretaries gathered for the Annual Members' Meeting (AMM) 2022 in London from 13-15 June, where they met in person for the first time after two years of virtual meetings during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Rev. Dr Jooseop Keum, in his CWM General Secretary's report, spoke about engaging with member churches through the new programmatic structure, and the new thematic direction of the AMM moving forward, where there is listening to more input and engaging in missiological discernment and dialogue; and developing AMM as one of the most dynamic, spiritual and missional spaces to strengthen CWM as an authentic partnership of 32 member churches and ecumenical partners in carrying out God's mission in the world. In addition, future AMM will span four days instead of three, to give space for more profound missional reflections based on our contemporary challenges, including exposure to the hosting church and worship with local congregations. It also aims to ensure the continuity and efficiency of the AMM work through better leadership structure and participation, and to improve the gender and age balance of the AMM based on the spirit of the general assembly and an equal partnership in the mission.

The hybrid meeting saw the effective participation of member church representatives, who engaged in lively, perceptive, and informative conversations in-person or virtually during plenary sessions. They covered wide-ranging issues such as transformative discipleship being actuated in ecumenical engagement; new opportunities for online ministry to youth and diaspora communities in the new normal; decolonising our mindsets and rethinking our theological approach, and the digital divide.

Member church delegates received a comprehensive report on CWM's The Onesimus Project (TOP), presented by Rev. Dr Roderick Hewitt, Chairperson of TOP Core Group. He highlighted in detail the Project's new direction that endeavours to work on four main areas: addressing legacies of slavery through an act of confession and reparation; joining in global efforts to tackle modern-day slavery; education for liberation by decolonising theological education; and transformative ecumenism to nurture opportunities for ecumenical collaboration on this issue. Based on these main working areas, TOP will be launched on 23 August 2022 in South Africa.

Also, the keynote address on "Rising to Life: Transforming Discipleship in a Wounded World" was delivered by Rev. Dr Fidon Mwombeki, All African Conference of Churches (AACC) General Secretary. He reminded those present that transforming discipleship is both a gift and a calling to be active collaborators with God in pursuing peace in a world wounded by racism, breakdown of families, environment degradation, militarization and conflict, and economic injustice.

Finally, the AMM officially concluded with a Closing Worship and Holy Communion conducted by Rev. Dr. Keum, Rev. Dr Frin Lewis Smith, a former CWM Trustee and minister of the United Reformed Church (URC), and Rev. Michael Jagessar, Mission Secretary for Caribbean region.

AFRICA

United Church of Zambia (UCZ) Lusaka Presbytery unveils new investment firm

Lusaka Presbytery investment firm (credit - UCZ Twitter)

In The United Church of Zambia (UCZ) Lusaka Presbytery's shift from traditional methods of mobilising church funds for mission, it has launched Umodzi Investments, a newly registered company to spearhead all its investment activities. During the official event on 11 June, Lusaka Presbytery Bishop Rev. Dr Lordwell Siame spoke about the church's need to expand its investment portfolio following the negative economic impact the pandemic has had on the church members. In addition, Dr Siame thanked the UCZ for providing the policy framework for church investment at all levels, while the UCZ Presbytery's Investment Committee Convener Mr. Moses Nawa said that the company's registration was a culmination of a wider consultation process that involved church members and leaders in the Presbytery.

PACIFIC

Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand (PCANZ) will offer future land sales to Maori iwi first

The Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand (PCANZ) has reached a milestone decision to offer any future church-owned land for sale to Maori iwi first. This comes as PCANZ reckons with its colonial past and seeks to build even stronger relationships with tangata whenua (people of the land).

PCANZ is a big landowner in New Zealand, with an estimated $1.5 billion in assets, including more than 400 places of worship. Much of their land has been acquired through land sales and gifts, but other areas are thought to be inherited from the Crown who confiscated land after the New Zealand Land Wars.

"By the year 1900 the Presbyterian Church was the biggest denomination in the country so clearly we have a role in this, and in the history of colonisation in Aotearoa New Zealand," said PCANZ Moderator Right Rev. Hamish Galloway.

"We've been on the other side of history as a church, but this time, we're taking a different stance and have decided issues like justice and the treaty, and honouring the Treaty and our Māori partners (are important)," said Rev Dr Wayne Te Kaawa.

The church has returned some land for free, including land at Maungapōhatu belonging to the people of Tūhoe.

PCANZ Moderator's Refugee Sunday Message

The Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand (PCANZ) Moderator Right Rev Hamish Galloway has exhorted church members to "understand our biblical mandate to be informed and care about this (refugee) crisis" in his

Refugee Sunday message on 26 June. With millions around the world living in displacement, poverty and vulnerability, the PCANZ Moderator spoke about how he has heard stories of compassionate action taken by churches geographically near Ukraine, and urged them to take concrete action as well. This can be in the form of giving through Christian World Service, or befriending people in their neighbourhoods who have had to flee their homelands, to build understanding, and listening to their stories.

EAST ASIA

CWM General Secretary's video greeting for Presbyterian Church of Taiwan (PCT)'s General Assembly

During the Presbyterian Church of Taiwan (PCT)'s recent General Assembly, CWM General Secretary Rev. Dr Jooseop Keum sent a short video greeting, where he affirmed PCT's active partnership in "facilitating the mission for peace and justice in the world, especially through the Taiwan Ecumenical Forum (TEF)".

He spoke about how PCT "never compromised its stance on the issue of justice and self-determination despite the challenges and

oppression", and mentioned its recent statement on the conflict in Ukraine as another example of the church's commitment to peace and life.
Rev. Dr Keum emphasized God's call to transforming discipleship, and how it invites us to be disciples who are constantly open to being transformed individually and communally in following of the mission of Jesus, stating: "As the church of Christ, we are called to advocate for prophetic witness to transform and heal this wounded world."

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CjaxsPjs2rc

The CWM General Secretary then concluded with congratulations to PCT's women ministry for its centennial anniversary and expressed sincere appreciation for PCT and its leadership for its ongoing partnership in mission and ecumenical movement with CWM, assuring them of CWM's continual journey in solidarity with Taiwanese churches and people.

SOUTH ASIA

Barishal Diocese of Church of Bangladesh (COB) ordains two female deacons

Women's Ordination at Barishal Diocese

The Barishal Diocese of the Church of Bangladesh (COB) has ordained two females as deacons – a occasion for rejoicing as it marked the resumption of women's ordination in COB after a 15-year interval. The ordination also meant that the new Diocese can ensure inclusiveness in all areas of ministry.
A purification ceremony was held in Bengali tradition for the five candidates on 11 December 2021. They were ordained the next day, following the sacred sacraments at Christ The King Church, Khalishpur, Khulna.

Church of South India (CSI) organises medical camps

The Church of South India (CSI) Synod, its

Medical camp at CNI St Martin's Church

Department of Mission and Evangelism and SEVA Department jointly organised a free Medical Camp at CNI St. Martin's Church late last year. Over 200 people including missionaries in South Kerala Diocese and East Kerala Diocese and their families benefitted from the event.
In addition, 181 people received medical assistance during another medical camp at Nalla Samarian Clinic under Serapattu, CSI Kanyakumari Diocese. Jointly organised by the CSI Synod, CSI SEVA, Diocesan Missionary Prayer Band (DMPB), and Department of Mission and Evangelism, the event also presented an opportunity to raise awareness of community healthcare.

CARIBBEAN

Guyana Congregational Union (GCU) micro-credit scheme enables new poultry business

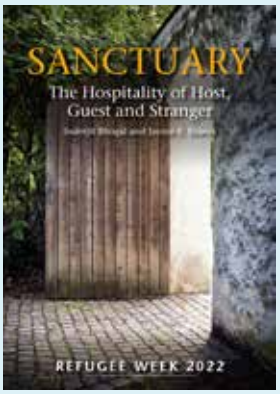
Collin Morgan, a construction worker and

member of Perseverance Congregational Church within the Guyana Congregational Union (GCU) was one of many around the world whose jobs were decimated by the pandemic. With faith, creativity, and hard work, he and his wife Trivanna pivoted to start a small poultry business, successfully funded by the GCU through the CWM COVID-19 Mission Initiative Grant. The Collin, Trivanna Poultry Centre became a reality and to facilitate the promising business' expansion, they have since applied for and received a loan under the GCU Micro Credit Scheme.

The United Reformed Church (URC) celebrates milestone of achieving 100% Eco Synods

The United Reformed Church (URC) is celebrating the milestone that all its 11 synods have signed up to become an "Eco Synod", fulfilling part of URC's wider commitment to urgently reduce carbon emissions across church life. Eco Synod is part of A Rocha UK's Eco Church scheme, which awards churches and synods awarded bronze, silver, or gold status as they take action to improve their carbon footprint.

The Eco Synod criteria was developed in partnership with the URC to assist Synods in supporting local churches to engage in creation care through Eco Church, and to look at Synod-level activities and policies. Simeon Mitchell, URC Secretary for Church and Society said: "It's brilliant that all Synods are now engaging with the Eco Synod programme as a structure to take forward their environmental commitments. The leadership in this area shown by Synods is vital and encouraging as we seek as a denomination to respond to the urgency of the climate crisis by renewing our Environmental Policy and setting a more ambitious target for reaching net-zero carbon emissions across the whole of church life."



Churches Together in Britain and Ireland (CTBI) produces resource for Refugee Week 2022

Churches Together in Britain and Ireland (CTBI) has produced a new Bible Study resource "Sanctuary: The Hospitality of Host, Guest and Stranger" offering reflections, prayers and ideas for action for this year's Refugee Week from 20-26 June. Produced together with Rev Dr Inderjit Bhogal and Dr Jayme R Reaves, it supports Christians, church communities and ecumenical groups in reflecting on the significance of sanctuary for our time in the context of Refugee Week. The Sunday at the end of Refugee Week is designated as Refugee Sunday, that allows them to express through prayer and witness how sanctuary and hospitality to the stranger is central to the Christian call to love our neighbours.

Newbigin Public Lecture 2022

A Newbigin Public Lecture was given by Dr Cathy Ross (missiologist, author, CMS) on Saturday 2 July 2022, together with a celebration of the Newbigin Pioneering Hub, a 50th anniversary project for the United Reformed Church (URC). To stimulate Christians into more thoughtful and deeper engagement in the places they live and serve, a public lecture is given by a high profile Christian leader who embodies the contemporary spirit of Lesslie Newbigin. In previous years this has included Dr Steve Bevans (2018), Dr Krish Kandiah (2019), John Newbigin and Dr Ash Barker (2021).

The Newbigin Pioneering Hub is a collaboration between United Reformed Church, Congregational Federation (CF), Church Mission Society and the Seedbeds organisation. With a mission to discover, nurture, empower and release a new Community of Pioneers, able to see God's love and shalom flourish in local communities, this new venture is open to all and is part of celebrating the past 50

Lodge Road Church Centre URC

years of the URC by investing the future in local communities.

Rev Dr Ash Barker, who leads the Newbigin Pioneering Hub from Winson Green, inner city Birmingham, said: "We long for every local community to flourish in God's love and shalom, but know so many neighbourhoods are missing out right now. I believe this new venture can unearth a new generation of Pioneers, ready to be planted personally in local places and able to grow people into new communities of faith, hope and compassion wherever Jesus has called them to serve. We have hard-won insights from experienced Pioneers that can help form, guide and inspire a new generation of Pioneers from here."

The past two years of COVID-19 has been a time where churches have had to rethink and devise new ways of being church and community, be it pastoral contact by providing food and medicine, or caring for members over the phone or internet.

CWM Europe churches and partners reflect on "Imagining church post-COVID19" in video series

The church post Covid-19, CWM Europe

Prior to the pandemic ending or becoming endemic, CWM Europe's member churches and ecumenical partners are thinking ahead together on what church and ministry may look like post-COVID. They have shared their brief reflections and insights in a series of eight short videos.

These videos feature colleagues from our member churches UWI, PKN, PCW and URC, as well as Cytun (Churches Together in Wales) and Presbyterian Church (USA). Some videos are in Welsh, and Dutch, with English subtitles.

Take a look through this link, and be encouraged:

https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLWR0ozHdN6oMOagu3A8ad64klqfdsl6N2

VIEWPOINTS

TRANSFORMING DISCIPLESHIP IN A WOUNDED WORLD

KEYNOTE ADDRESS, CWM ANNUAL MEMBERS MEETING

LONDON, 13 JUNE, 2022

By Rev. Dr. Fidon R. Mwombeki
(General Secretary of All Africa Conference of Churches)

INTRODUCTION

In 2010 the people of God with passion for mission met in Edinburgh to commemorate or celebrate 100 years of global mission after the historic conference of 1910. We were encouraged by the success of mission over 100 years, but also humbled by the reality of the unfinished task ahead of us. At the same time, we boldly expressed our optimism stemming from our faith in the God of mission, who promised to be with us "to the end of age" (Mt. 28:20). He commanded his disciples to go into the world and make people his disciples!

In 2018, eight years later, the great and memorable WCC Conference for World Mission and Evangelism (CWME) was held in my home country, Tanzania, in Arusha. We were reminded of our calling to discipleship, as an overriding motif for our mission engagement, through being and doing. Thanks to the able leadership of our brother, Dr. Jooseop Keum, now the General Secretary of CWM, we focused as never before on the calling to "transforming discipleship."

Regarding the topic of "Transforming Discipleship in a Wounded World", the echo of the Arusha International Mission Conference cannot be missed. Yes, discipleship must be transforming. Transforming discipleship is both an invitation to a relationship, and a calling or a vocation for action. Towards the Arusha CWME and definitely afterwards, many publications have come up, which shed light on contextual interpretations and implications of transforming discipleship.

THE ARUSHA CALL TO DISCIPLESHIP

On March 13, 2018 as the result of the Conference, hundreds of mission practitioners and church leaders, old and young, clergy and lay, male and female, from all continents, unanimously issued "The Arusha Call to Discipleship." I presume that most of us here have engaged with the Call through its many resources which were developed afterwards, therefore I will not speak more about it. I have found the WCC publication on the theme, very helpful: Called to Transforming Discipleship: Devotions from the World Council of Churches Conference on Mission and Evangelicm, (Edited by Risto Jukko, Jooseop Keum and Kyeong-Ah Woo, Geneva: WCC Publications, 2019). However, for reference at the moment, let me recite here a section of the call, which is definitely the background of the theme:

Discipleship is both a gift and a calling to be active collaborators with God for the transforming of the world (1Thessalonians 3:2). In what the church's early theologians called "theosis" or deification, we share God's grace by sharing God's mission. This journey of discipleship leads us to share and live out God's love in Jesus Christ by seeking justice and peace in ways that are different from the world (John 14:27). Thus, we are responding to Jesus' call to follow him from the margins of our world (Luke 4:16-19).

As disciples of Jesus Christ, both individually and collectively:

We are called by our baptism to transforming discipleship: a Christ-connected way of life in a world where many face despair, rejection, loneliness, and worthlessness.

We are called to worship the one Triune God—the God of justice, love, and grace—at a time when many worship the false god of the market system (Luke 16:13).

We are called to proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ—the fullness of life, the repentance and forgiveness of sin, and the promise of eternal life—in word and deed, in a violent world where many are sacrificed to the idols of death (Jeremiah 32:35) and where many have not yet heard the gospel.

We are called to joyfully engage in the ways of the Holy Spirit, who empowers people from the margins with agency, in the search for justice and dignity (Acts 1:8; 4:31).

We are called to discern the word of God in a world that communicates many contradictory, false, and confusing messages.

We are called to care for God's creation, and to be in solidarity with nations severely affected by climate change in the face of a ruthless human-centered exploitation of the environment for consumerism and greed.

We are called as disciples to belong together in just and inclusive communities, in our quest for unity and on our ecumenical journey, in a world that is based upon marginalization and exclusion.

We are called to be faithful witnesses of God's transforming love in dialogue with people of other faiths in a world where the politicization of religious identities often causes conflict.

We are called to be formed as servant leaders who demonstrate the way of Christ in a world that privileges power, wealth, and the culture of money (Luke 22:25-27).

We are called to break down walls and seek justice with people who are dispossessed and displaced from their lands—including migrants, refugees and asylum seekers—and to resist new frontiers and borders that separate and kill (Isaiah 58:6-8).

We are called to follow the way of the cross, which challenges elitism, privilege, personal and structural power (Luke 9:23).

We are called to live in the light of the resurrection, which offers hope-filled possibilities for transformation.

This is a call to transforming discipleship.

TRANSFORMING DISCIPLESHIP

Transforming discipleship, as defined in Arusha, is the realization that we are called to collaborate with God for transforming the world, by living out God's love in Jesus Christ, which has implications in seeking what we at All Africa Conference of Churches put as our vision: "churches [in Africa] together for life, peace, justice and dignity." When we were studying the call to discipleship, I was astonished by how diverse the translation of the word for discipleship is around the world is. In Swahili, we use the same word for disciples as pupils, or students. Those on training by a teacher. And this training may be oral or practical, or apprenticeship. Sometimes we translate it also to mean "followers." The nuances are rich and diverse, that in every language and culture.

DISCIPLESHIP TRANSFORMS US

The adjective "transforming" is also itself multi-nuanced. I first see it as directed to us, that being Jesus' disciples transforms us. That is why we keep on sharing the gospel, because it is a transforming gospel. When we believe our Lord, we get transformed. The Bible tells us how the gospel, when received by faith, or faith itself which is by the way a gift from God, transforms us.The transformation of us and our life is so good that we simply have to share it with those we love.

Romans 12:1-2 Paul writes, ***"I appeal to you therefore, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God—what is good and acceptable and perfect."*** This is the gist of our calling to transforming discipleship. As we become disciples of Christ, we are transformed, starting from our minds. We see the world differently, from the viewpoint of God. We are not just human beings living in the world and having the same mind and opinion as the world. Our minds are transformed. Our passion, focus, priorities, commitments, plans and view of the future and the world are determined by the transformed view we get from Jesus Christ our Lord.

DISCIPLESHIP LEADS TO WORK TO TRANSFORMING OTHERS, THE WORLD

The second view on transforming discipleship, is the direct result of our transformed being. It is a consequence of our own transformation. When we look at people, as Paul says in 2 Corinthians 5:16, "From now on, therefore, we regard no one from a human point of view." We do not see people or the world from the point of view of prevailing ideological and cultural values and views, but from God's point of view. We see our relationship to the world and to people with transformed eyes. We see in every human being the image of God and the will of God for everyone, which is life, peace and dignity. We are touched by the suffering of everyone, and we are moved by the Spirit of God to really not focus only on ourselves, but on the wounded world of God.
As we see the world, including its people, in the way of

God, we are called to contribute to work for its transformation so that the kingdom of God, the rule of God, will be manifest in the life of everyone and everything. We are called to action. We know that God has chosen to work through and with us to bring transformation in the world. And this world, is wounded. Therefore, it is a discipleship which leads us to work to transform the world.

A WOUNDED WORLD

In the Arusha Call to Discipleship, the world is depicted in a very gloomy situation, full of wounds, and scars. It says, in the world, many face despair, rejection, loneliness and feelings of worthlessness. Many worship the false god of the market system. Many have not heard the saving gospel of life, are sacrificed to the idols of death. Many at the margins, searching for justice and dignity. There are many contradictory, false and confusing messages. There is ruthless human exploitation of the earth for consumerism and greed. Relations are characterized by marginalization and exclusion on the one hand, and elitism, privilege and power on the other. Polarization of religious identities, and conflicts abound. People seek power, wealth and the culture of money distorts relationships. Everywhere we meet displaced people—migrants, refugees, asylum seekers.

The list shows the world is wounded in many different ways. For today, let us focus on the wounded world in a few major aspects, which have direct influence of our life as witnesses of Christ today, even after the Arusha conference. I will stick to just five major aspects.

1. SLAVERY AND RACISM

On November 1, 2022 the 2000 AACC All Africa Youth Congress participants will probably visit the so-called "Elmina Slave castle" in Ghana. They will see and feel the horror of slavery, at this one of the places where thousands of African young people like them, were shipped to the Americas. It is just one of those exit points which symbolizes the dehumanizing nature of slave trade. In this castle, above the dungeon where poor Africans were forcefully chained awaiting their lead to "the door of no return," loaded into ships to the Caribbean and Americas, is a chapel, where the British slave traders met and thanked God for the good "cargo" beneath them. The brave young men and women, boys and girls were groaning in their chains, with no food or drink or sanitation. But for the white men upstairs they were simply that, "cargo". The young people will reflect on the most horrendous and dehumanizing history of African peoples who were subjected to slavery. They will realize that the dignity of African people was violated in the most dehumanizing and painful way, mistreated worse than today's animals. Their humanity was seen as not the same as those of the whites. They could be killed, whipped, their organs chopped, sold and kept under whatever circumstances, with no rights at all.

As we marked 400 years since the first slave ship landed in Virginia, the USA, it is so sad and appalling that the fate of black people in the Americas, notwithstanding having had a black president, still is not very different from the past. When we read the statistics of those in USA jails, or in the favelas of Brazil, or the coastal sides of the Central America, the dignity of black people has suffered a lot over all these centuries. What the "Black lives matter" movement has revealed to the world is that black people

are disregarded everywhere and seen as inferior to others. Racism is simply evil. We hear what is happening to black people in the Arabic countries, where they are killed, maimed, denied their rights with no recourse. These stories raise a question, which is even more startling, **why do we not have remnants of the millions of slaves who were shipped through the Indian ocean? What happened to those shipped from Zanzibar and the whole African East coast? Why do we not see their descendants? Are we talking about ethnic cleansing? Did they get children? Did they simply disappear with no trace? Was it not even worse than those in the Americas? Are they doing the same today as we heard in Qatar construction sites and the domestic workers in Saudi Arabia and even Lebanon?**

There have been several incidents in the recent past to illustrate this. During the Covid-19 outbreak, we saw the horror of mistreatment of black people in China, where they were not even allowed to enter shops in cities they have been living in for business, while white people were allowed. Most recently we have been observing the incidents around the war in Ukraine. When people had to flee, black peoples from all continents, who were there legally and paying their way in education, were the last ones allowed to board evacuation trains. Several countries would process black people as last ones. We have recently heard racist policies in countries like UK and others, where Ukrainian refugees are allowed in unlimited numbers but people of darker skin pigmentation are not. Even Denmark has changed the law in order to treat Ukrainians not as "non-western." A shameful agreement some countries to reroute unwanted refugees and asylum seekers to African countries (it baffles me still how Africans are legitimating this), because they are simply not wanted.

All these actions reveal the wounds of racism, as well as colonialism. I know there are other people in many parts of the world who suffer from racism, but people of African descent face unproportionate share. Whether they are in Africa itself or elsewhere, black people live with wounds of colonialism and slavery, until today.

Apart from a general fight against racism, there is a need to revisit the wounds of slavery. Slavery did cause tremendous damage to the egos of the people and continues to inflict wounds today. Is it not fair to really work for reparations? Gestures like that of the King of Belgium returning the stolen mask to the Democratic Republic of Congo should be seen as starting point to call

for proper preparations. How much of Belgian wealth was a result of looting and killings in DRC? Should we let the bygone be bygone? Really?

Racism is raising its head clearly all over the world, and we must fight it as a calling of Jesus' disciples. We need to transform the situation. And transforming discipleship calls us to be on the side of justice, calling for justice to those who suffer from the effects of slavery and exploitation. Transforming discipleship calls us to join forces with all who are suffering, whether people of Asian descent in America, or people of African descent everywhere, or the indigenous peoples of the world, or the Dalit in India. This is a calling to work with people on the margins.

2. INDIVIDUAL AND FAMILY WOUNDS

At Arusha, the listening group remarked that the speakers mentioned issues which brought misery in the lives of people. They included "forced migration, disease and its effects on the population, ecological degradation, war and conflict, gender based violence, appropriation of land, property and unemployment, and a reduction of social welfare and security. These issues impacted heavily on the family structures disintegrating them further and thus contributing to the brokenness of theworld" (Jukko, Keum and Woo, p. 49)

As we meet today, the wounded world means a lot of people

with wounds and pain at personal and family level. When the gospel was proclaimed in any culture, in any community, the faith in Christ brought new life. This new life was not spiritualized. It had tangible effects on everyday life. It was the gospel that brought forgiveness of sins, which freed people from the life of guilt and slavery to sin. People with habits which damaged their lives, including fear of witchcraft, alcoholism, superstition, corruption, self-enrichment through illegal means were liberated. I know many societies where people testify about the liberating power of the gospel. We are called to this transforming power of discipleship.

Today, so many people are suffering in the world because of what is going on in the world, and the gospel, we see the impact of this lack. Naomi Osaka pulled out of tennis competition in Japan. Simone Biles abruptly pulled out of gymnastics individual all-round final competition at the Olympics in 2021. In 2009, Robert Enke, the paramount goalkeeper of Germany national team committed suicide because he feared the police were going to take his adopted daughter away because he was depressed. I recently saw a movie, "Princess Diana", which shows how she struggled with depression. We see the seriousness of wounds at a personal level, even those we would consider "successful" and famous. How about the majority who lose their property, their loved ones, their jobs, their respect, their positions in society?

So many people are suffering from hidden wounds, leading to high levels of depression and other mental ailments, as well as rising violence and suicide rates even in very wealthy countries, where many young people from countries wish to flee to. The feelings of need to meet the pressure of materialism, self-centredness, career-success, fame and power leave many souls wounded. Many who have experienced wounding acts in their past continue to suffer silently, until for some of them it is no longer bearable and they end up endangering others and themselves.

The church must rethink of our focus on the problem of mental health, which is heightened by the world focus on materialism, consumerism, uncontrolled competition, as well as marginalization of the majority of the people. Whatever the causes may be, we need to refocus on mental health, to also oppose misleading theologies which falsely promise quick and spiritualized interventions. While we do not deny the possibility of miracles, God normally chooses to use us in ordinary ways to help those in need.

The level of the family is even more severely affected. We live in a period when, unfortunately, it is no longer so obvious what one means when one speaks of a family. What is family? Is there an ideal for the family? Does everything go because of the changed time? This question is serious in many places in our wounded world. A family should be a place that is clear to everyone. A place for comfort, for solidarity and for socialization and raising the next generations. A place where one feels safe and accepted. But, with the current rate of disruption of life in many ways, it is very difficult for many people. For example, for many in rural Africa we see the breakdown of family which has been manifested by the unacceptable rates of child pregnancies, especially during Covid-19 lockdowns, when families were forced to stay together and not venture outside. The question we are asking is, who made these little girls pregnant in the family? And who is asking that question?

Most painful is the increasing levels of gender-based violence, mostly in the family, against women and girls. I was surprised to realize that even in the economically more developed countries, even with high levels of education, GBV is still a problem. But even more so in families where women have no economic independence, who are physically and mentally abused by their husbands, in oppressive cultures. They continue to suffer exploitation and sexual violence, remaining virtual objects for use by men. Domestic violence in Africa is even becoming an epidemic, with increasing femicide.

A special group we see as living with painful wounds in Africa and probably elsewhere, is that of widows. We at AACC have launched a campaign, "justice for widows". Widows do only live with not only the wound of losing a husband. They suffer tremendously afterwards, and are forced to undergo embarrassing and painful rituals, in order to prove they are not the ones who killed their husbands. They are denied inheritance and sometimes are forced to be inherited themselves by the people they do not love. They suffer for the rest of their lives.

We are called into transforming discipleship, to denounce such evils. We must work resolutely to eliminate all shameful and harmful practices, and to care for those suffering. We must transform legal frameworks and strengthen enforcement mechanisms to ensure justice for all. We must also, as churches, understand the seriousness of mental health in our work, as we continue to provide other medical services. People have deep wounds. They need care, understanding and accompaniment as Christ did.

3. THE WHOLE CREATION HAS BEEN GROANING... (ROM8:22)

It is not only the people who are in pain. It is the whole creation. It has been wounded. It is crying. On this aspect, we do not need to say very much. We are all witnesses of the graveness of the destruction of the earth. From small island countries in the Pacific, to semi-arid areas of Africa, we are stunned by the apparent negligence of humans as we continue to inflict pain and destruction to our one planet. The accelerated clearance of the "lungs of the world" in the tropical forests of the Amazon and the Congo, which disregards the groaning of the people of God for the world, due to irresponsible political leadership, is leading the world to disaster.

I can only say here, that faith actors need to multiply their efforts to fight for the climate and the world. At the AACC we are forming a continental Africa Faith Actors Network for Climate justice. The goal is not only to focus on the global, big-picture impact of climate change, which tends to blame (rightly) the biggest polluters, but also to small steps individuals should and can take to contribute to the solution of restoring the world health. From the grassroots movement to the global COP conferences, we must play an increasing role to restore, and preserve the health of our already wounded world.

4. STRIVING FOR ECONOMIC JUSTICE

The economic injustice of the world, between the poor and the rich, at national and international levels, is concerning. It is therefore imperative that as disciples of Christ, we are called to struggle for global economic justice, at continental, national and individual levels. This struggle is not new. But we must keep working on it, inasmuch as it is difficult and with strong opposition. It is a matter of faith.

When Elon Musk decided to play the world by showing his prowess in swaying the stock markets and great companies like Twitter in the last few days, it was yet an indication of the failing system of the global economy, which created situations of total injustice that single person can pretty much decide to cause pain for all of us just with a tweet. How is it possible that just a few people own much more than whole economies of so many countries? And how much we were positively surprised to see some of those rich people at Davos this year demand to be taxed more, because, as we learnt from Donald Trump, the rich do not pay taxes and get away with it, while poor shopkeepers get

jailed in some countries by not issuing a sales receipt which contains a tax of some very little sums.

The Covid-19 pandemic has demonstrated the injustice in the world in unprecedented measure. In some countries, lock-downs were possible, because the governments in those countries had resources and systems to support people's sustenance even if they stayed indoors for months. But for Africa, there was not even an attempt to enforce lock-downs, because that would not work. Majority of the people have no bank accounts, and there are no social security systems to ensure sustenance in such cases. People must literally go to work every day to earn the living for the day, otherwise life is not possible. In the rich countries, people got vaccines almost immediately after the extraordinary, unprecedented speed of discovery of the vaccines. The countries even stored more vaccines than they needed, and donated just a few, which were occasionally almost reaching expiry dates) to poor countries through the COVAX program. We started talking about vaccine discrimination, as every country took measures to lock itself in, and vaccines for Africa and other poor countries were not available in the beginning. Now they are available, but people have discovered that they can survive without them, therefore they are not taking them. Millions of doses are being destroyed now.

We must continue to fight for the new international economic order. We must fight for economic justice at national levels by effective advocacy, which includes fighting against corruption and unethical, predatory lending to the poor countries and individuals. Every church is called to see and act in its own context. It is a matter of our discipleship.

5. SEEK PEACE AND PURSUE IT (1 PET 3:11)

Our world is wounded severely by war and conflicts. In Africa, in 2013 the African Union's "Agenda 2063: The Africa we Want," set a target of silencing the guns by 2018! Africa is plagued by civil wars in many parts of the continent. The young people of AACC member churches gathered signatures from across the continent and lodged the lament to the African Union commission for failure to silence the guns. That the African Union extended the deadline for ten more years, it was the clearest sign of failure. There are now more armed conflicts in Africa than they were in 2013. And in every armed conflict, most people wounded, are displaced and live in deplorable conditions. We have seen new conflicts arise in Ethiopia, Mozambique, in addition to never ending ones in Democratic Republic of Congo and many countries (especially former French colonies) in Central and West Africa. The Sahel region is infected with armed, Islamic fundamentalist insurgency, which makes life of most people simply full of pain and despair. The shame and menace of intra country insurgency and terrorism are spreading not only in Africa.

We had thought that armed conflicts and wars are things of the past in Europe. Alas, then this year Russia has started a war in Europe. Refugees from Ukraine are all over Europe. Looking at the images and listening to the stories of those who have been forced to flee the war, we are pained and reminded that the evil of violence has once again raised its horns in Europe. Looking at the devastation of cities and villages caused by this war, one thinks about those people who have lost their homes and livelihoods for good. What did they do to face this suffering? The impact of this war has been felt worldwide, with rising fuel and food prices across the world, again showing how interconnected the world is. We share the pain and the wounds of those in Ukraine and beyond.

It would be oblivious not to notice how the war in Ukraine has been linked to the fears in East Asia. The rhetoric about Taiwan, China and North Korea, growing tensions in the South China Sea, and the emergence of the Quad and other groupings, sound to many as drumbeats of war. Commitment to pacifism and anti-war sentiments are steadily giving way to fear. This fear is leading to accelerated militarization and modernization of increasingly devastating weapons systems the world has not seen before. The new armed race of unprecedented proportion is already on course. It seems that the threat of obliteration of the world, once seen as a fading possibility, is now emerging as a real probability with intense nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction, with accelerated technology of fast, undetectable devastating weapons.

At this time, we hear not so much talk about peace and de-escalation of war and conflict. We are called in our discipleship, to provide these voices of peace. We need to work for peace. And the Bible says, we must not only seek peace, but pursue it. We must pursue it because it is not an easy task with obviously quick results. Let us not give up working for peace. What we normally proclaim in Africa as AACC is a call for peace because, we realize, once peace is lost, it takes many years, many tears, and many resources to get it back. It will take many years for Ukraine to return to normal, if at all.

One of the catalysts of conflict is interreligious animosity, particularly among Christians and Moslems. We are called, as disciples of Christ, to consistently fight for dignity and image of God in every human being. It is very sad to see that even some Christians, in the name of faith in Christ, advocate for or tolerate violence

against people of other faiths. We must know that, contrary to our wishes and hopes, after 100 years of the Edinburgh Mission Conference, still only a third of world population is Christian. Most of those in formally Christian Europe no longer identify with the faith, let alone have it. That is the reality we must live with. We must work against inflicting wounds on those of other faiths, and we must renounce violent fundamentalism of each and every faith as against the will of the God of peace.

CONCLUSION

Yes, the world is wounded. The people of the world, God's people, need transformed disciples to lead transformation of the world. Spiritually, socially, politically, ecologically, economically—from individual, to family, to nation, to continents, and the globe. Even though the work and the needs are so enormous that we can easily get discouraged to even try, let us have hope in the Lord who sends us with the promise to be with us. Yes, we must each of us do our part. As the African proverb goes, the only way to eat an elephant is: ONE PIECE AT A TIME.

As Paul says, *"therefore my beloved, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labour is not in vain,"* **(1 Cor 15:58).**

COVID ECONOMICS AND YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT: THE ROLE OF CHURCHES

Dr. Rogate R. Mshana

In many countries the issue of youth unemployment and the inability of youth to be employed or create self-employment has been a perennial problem and a future "bomb" especially for many developing countries particularly those that are low-income ones. This problem has been exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic and the current Russia and Ukraine war.

Today, according to the United Nations, there are 1.8 billion people between the ages of 10-24—they are the largest generation of youth in history. Close to 90 per cent of them live in developing countries, where they make up a large proportion of the population. Their numbers are expected to grow—between 2015 and 2030 alone, about 1.9 billion young people are projected to turn 15 years old. The UN has included Youth in the Sustainable Development goal no. 8 because they see in the Youth as critical thinkers, change makers, innovators, communicators and leaders in their communities.

The International Labour Organization has made several studies that are still not fully embraced and implemented by states. The ILO survey report 2020 conducted in 112 countries with 12,000 youth respondents, found that 'the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on young people [is] systematic, deep and disproportionate.' Twenty-three per cent of young people aged 18-24 who were working pre-pandemic are now unemployed, and those who are working have reported reductions in hours and income. "Students' perceptions of their future career prospects are bleak, with 40 per cent facing the future with uncertainty and 14 per cent with fear," the report adds. Globally, young people are feeling more uncertain about what the future holds (https//www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public) accessed 19/07/22.). The global survey aimed to capture the immediate effects of the pandemic on the lives of young people (aged 18-24) with regards to employment, education, mental well-being, rights and social activism.

This ignominious global scenario for young people is a concern for not only governments and civil society but also Churches. If we scan youth unemployment in the regions of CWM, we observe that if something is not done, the next generation will continue to live in poverty, destroy the ecosystem and suffer unspeakable lack of mental well-being. This might lead to organized crime, bad social behavior and a danger to global peace. In almost every region, youth unemployment and unsustainable livelihoods have increased. There is however, resilience among young people trying to keep their heads above water.

The Regional Youth Unemployment Situation

According to the Global Employment Trends for Youth 2020 (GET youth 2020), the youth unemployment rate in the Asia and the Pacific region has risen since 2012 and was estimated at 14.1 per cent in 2020, compared to 13.7 per cent globally. Prior to 2018, the youth unemployment rate in the region was below the global average.

The 77 Percent — Youth unemployment in Africa: Despite more than half of the African population being youth, the majority of them can neither find a job nor create self-employment. In the Gambia, for example, thousands embark on a dangerous journey across the Mediterranean to reach Europe, with some meeting their death before reaching their destination.

In the case of Africa, lack of youth employment is caused by bad policies and among other factors, capital flight from Africa that amounted to $1.4 trillion since 1970-2015 for 30 countries studied by Leone Ndikumana and James K. Boyce. **(https://www.peri.umass.edu/capital-flight-from-africa)**

Lack of funds to finance youth related employment and livelihood programs is a major reason for the problem. Inadequate relevant education and training for young people and lack of entrepreneurship skills are some of the courses for youth unemployment.
Across the 27 member states of the European Union, the overall youth unemployment rate was 13.9 percent, with Germany having the lowest youth unemployment rate of 5.7 percent.

Current Eurostat statistics put the number of people between 15 and 24 without a job at 5.6 million. The situation is particularly bad in Spain and Greece, the two countries most affected by the crisis.
(www.dw.com/en/the-lost-generation-youth-unemployment-in-the-eu/a-16925070)

Jamaica ranks in the fifth spot on the Caribbean nations with the most unemployed. The unemployment rate for youth is considerably higher at 30.3 percent, and the average unemployment rate for women is double that for men: 18.5 versus 9.3 percent, according to the World Bank. In Latin America and the Caribbean, there are 9.4 million unemployed young people, as well as 23 million who neither study nor work nor are in training. This share of the youth population is also known by the acronym NEET. More than 30 million youth only get informal employment, according to the new ILO report.
(www.ilo.org/caribbean/newsroom/WCMS_738634/lang--en/index.htm)

The Covid-19 pandemic has disrupted every aspect of our lives. Even before the onset of the social crisis, the social and economic integration of young people was an ongoing challenge. Now unless urgent action is taken, young people are likely to suffer severe and long –lasting impact from the pandemic.

What are the solutions and the role of Churches?

Youth Employment

From the survey, young people gave well thought out solutions in various categories. On employment they propose measures to protect workers and support enterprises, jobs and income. With a view to protecting vulnerable and disadvantaged groups, young people proposed enhancing income support for the recently unemployed, presenting large-scale job losses through negotiation with employers, providing stimulus packages for small and medium-sized enterprises, and moving towards strengthening social protection floors as a way to extend the coverage of safely nets.

For such a proposal, churches could, through their advocacy programs for justice, create platforms where employers could be invited to assist young people. The churches could also negotiate with governments to prepare budgets that can support young people with stimulus packages for their enterprises.

On education and training

The focus should be to provide access to alternative learning opportunities-online learning and training opportunities need to adapt, so as to improve learning experiences reliant on better broadband connectivity, and provide access to ICT equipment, digital tools and teaching and learning materials, and quality curricula tailored to virtual audience of students.

It is also essential to strengthen the use of digital technologies across education and skills development providers, with strong focus on Technical Education Training (TVET) programs. There is also need to increase investment in digital solutions for practical skills development and improve access to and develop capacity of teachers, trainers, principals and managers on delivering on line, distance and blended learning with particular focus on TVET and skills development institutions and programs. It should be noted that there will always be a digital divide between Developed and developing countries particularly the low-income countries. Efforts should be made to close this gap.

It is essential to improve and modernize job counseling and career guidance to help young people plan a job and career path in industries and sectors with the capacity to absorb the influx of young graduates. Churches could play a big role in ensuring that their Vocational training Institutions are designed in such a way that their curricula links their students with productive sectors.

The youth recommend that public and private efforts should boost the quality and relevance of educational and training systems so they can better respond to the demand of the labor market in a post pandemic world.

On Youth Mental well-being

The survey found that, globally, one in two young people aged 18-29 are possibly subject to anxiety or depression, while further 17 percent are probably affected by it. Average mental well-being is worse for young women, as well as for younger youth. Young people whose education or work had been disrupted the most since the onset of the pandemic exhibited greatly reduced mental well-being. They were almost twice as likely to be affected by anxiety or depression as those who continued to be employed. This underscore the linkage between mental well-being and educational success and labor market integration. 38% of young people, globally are uncertain about their future career prospects and 16% are fearful.

The increased sense of anxiety and fear that this crisis has instilled in many young people threatens to delay recovery in education and youth employment outcomes.

For solutions, young people call for the safeguard of young people's mental well-being through mental health services, psychosocial support and sports activities, acting as stand alone modular measures integrated within youth employment and education interventions. Churches can initiate such programs under their diaconal work.

There is also need to offer mental well-being services particularly to young people whose school-to-work trajectory has been impacted due to disrupted educational careers or job losses. This implies up-scaling-mental well-being interventions within training and education institutions and public employment services. It is also important to foster measures that create a positive environment in the work place for the return to work and the continued support of young people.

Economy Of Life as the Real Panacea

The above solutions under the three categories suggested by the youth fall within the concept of the economy of life propagated by the Council for World Mission, the World Council of Churches and the World Communion of Reformed Churches. In the case of the youth, economy of Life is about responding to the following question:

How can the world work out sustainable development programs that will ensure provision of employment and sustainable livelihoods for young people?

Churches should advocate for an economy of life that will address all the issues raised by the youth. These can be summarized as boosting creation of labor demand; better preparing young people for the labor market; illuminating pathways to productive work; budgeting for youth programs, foster entrepreneurship; good employment policies for young people; vocational education that is linked to production sectors. Education and training program initiatives or extracurricular instruction that target the skills gap can focus on anything from employability skills; self –employment to job hunting and interviewing to entrepreneurship to digital vocational education including opportunity in the eco-justice economy. Micro-economic measures are needed to introduce more flexibility into the labor market.

Such measures are supposed to avoid the unsustainable concept of the neo-liberal economic paradigm, which focus on growth without limits, encouraging competition instead of cooperation and has created global disparities, poverty and ecological destruction. The switch to an economy of life is a move to a life-flourishing paradigm addressing all people and ecology. In here no one will be left behind.

Practical solutions will be dictated by different contexts in the regions of CWM but under the Economy of Life concept where inclusiveness, participation and ecological justice are some of the elements, it should be possible to address the plight of young people in the world.

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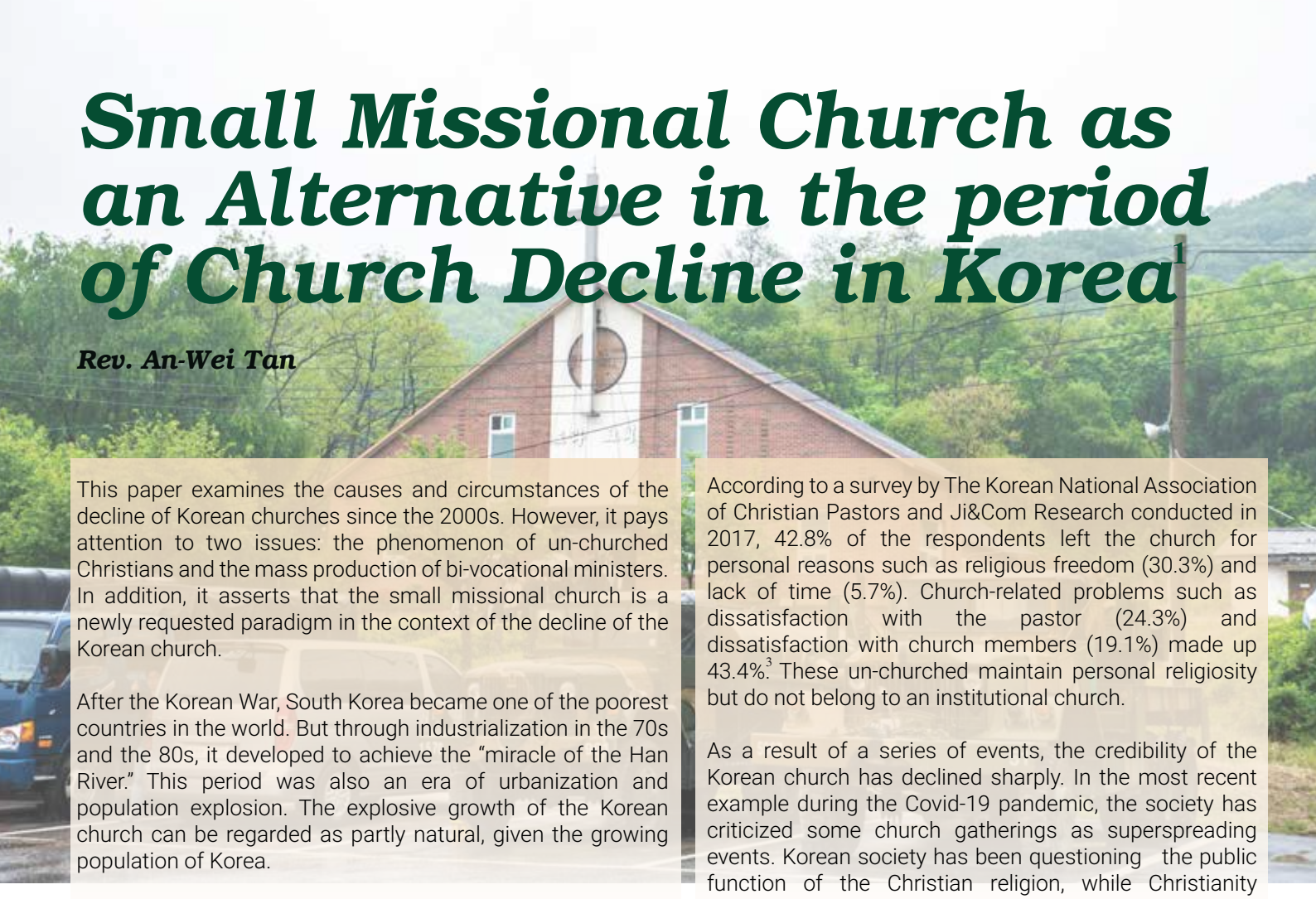
Small Missional Church as an Alternative in the period of Church Decline in Korea[1]

Rev. An-Wei Tan



This paper examines the causes and circumstances of the decline of Korean churches since the 2000s. However, it pays attention to two issues: the phenomenon of un-churched Christians and the mass production of bi-vocational ministers. In addition, it asserts that the small missional church is a newly requested paradigm in the context of the decline of the Korean church.

After the Korean War, South Korea became one of the poorest countries in the world. But through industrialization in the 70s and the 80s, it developed to achieve the "miracle of the Han River." This period was also an era of urbanization and population explosion. The explosive growth of the Korean church can be regarded as partly natural, given the growing population of Korea.

The growth of the Korean church began to slow as industrialization and urbanization were completed. The decline is also related to the decrease in population growth and the de-religious phenomenon in society.

A researcher presents five events that occurred in 2007 as indicators of slower growth of the Korean church.[2] The most prominent event was the abduction of a Korean short-term mission team in Afghanistan. The team had ignored Korean government's travel ban to enter Afghanistan for mission, and this incident shocked the entire nation. As a result, the Korean church became a target of criticism.

The Korean church led the independence movement during the Japanese colonial period, participated in democratization, and continues today to work for the poor. However, due to several incidents, the social perception of the Korean church turned negative. The media began to cover other adverse events within the church. As various issues with pastors' non-transparent financial dealings, sexual immorality, and privatization of church as family inheritance came to light, society evaluated the church in an increasingly negative light.

In the above -mentioned context, the Canaanite Saints phenomenon began to arise. 'Canaan' is a wordplay that reverses the Korean word Ga-na-an(Canaan) to An-na-ga(not going) which is similar to 'believing without belonging' or 'unchurched christian' in the West.

According to a survey by The Korean National Association of Christian Pastors and Ji&Com Research conducted in 2017, 42.8% of the respondents left the church for personal reasons such as religious freedom (30.3%) and lack of time (5.7%). Church-related problems such as dissatisfaction with the pastor (24.3%) and dissatisfaction with church members (19.1%) made up 43.4%.[3] These un-churched maintain personal religiosity but do not belong to an institutional church.

As a result of a series of events, the credibility of the Korean church has declined sharply. In the most recent example during the Covid-19 pandemic, the society has criticized some church gatherings as superspreading events. Korean society has been questioning the public function of the Christian religion, while Christianity became more privatized as some churches acted against the social climate when they should have fulfilled its citizenship duties. According to a survey by Ji&Com Research conducted in March 2022, Korean society evaluated the credibility of the Korean church as 31.8% in 2020, 20.9% in 2021, and 18.1% in 2022.[4]

There is an iImbalance in the supply and demand of pastors. Even though there is a limited number of churches and a the decreasing number of church members is decreasing, . The number of pastors is increasing, which means that pastors who cannot find a ministry site must start planting churches.

As of 2015, the number of pastors in Korea's Protestant churches reached 98,305.[5] There are about 400 seminaries in Korea—57 seminaries accredited by the Ministry of Education and 300 unaccredited—and 7,000 pastoral candidates are produced from these seminaries every year.

In cases where existing churches provide support for new church planting, the new church may grow to become stable. However, the common way is for pastors or a few households to start a church on their own. In this case, the pastor earns a living through other ways than pastoral work.

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1 This paper was first presented in International Association of Mission Studies, 2022.

2 Hee-Song Yang, 『다시 프로테스탄트』 (Again, Protestant) (Seoul: The Blessed People Publishing Co., 2012), pp41-53.

3 "The Korean National Association of Christian Pastors 2018 Research Analysis 1st Presentation", accessed May 17, 2022, http://www.kpastor.org/news/articleView.html?idxno=2036.

4 Do you trust the church? 32% 21 18%… the falling church", accessed May 17, 2022, https://news.kmib.co.kr/article/view.asp?arcid=0017016125&code=61221111&sid1=chr&fbclid=IwAR1VQoPKt_S_V0eWuN4br0_8rf_yu7kf09kt-c0wzMIQnkr1dAY2evHQz9Q.

5 The Academy of Korean Studies, Religion in Korea 2018 (Seoul: Ministry of Culture, Sports, and Tourism, 2018), pp108-16

In Korea, many are in bi-vocational ministry not because of a double calling but to sustain their livelihood.

After the major events in the 2000s that impacted the church's social standing, missiologists started active discussions about the missional church. For pastors, the missional church idea became a breakthrough alternative in church ministry. The missional church discussion also provided a tool to interpret the model of missional churches in Korea that pre-existed these discussions.

During these missional church discussions, the idea of café church was one of the first that arose. A café can be a point of contact for the church to meet residents and it can function as a space for various events and gatherings such as worship services and cultural events. In the same vein,

various other forms such as library church, concert hall church, and bookstore church emerged, and pastors took on the roles of baristas, librarians, and bookstore owners, naturally taking on dual roles.

The decline of the Korean church is a situation requiring a paradigm shift. Therefore, I would like to propose the small missional church as an alternative.

The idea that a larger church must have received greater blessings is not biblical but based on materialism. We need to remember the teaching that "each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function.,"(Romans 12:4, NIV). As one body in Christ, the church has the same mission, but not all have the same function. In that sense, different sizes of churches can be interpreted as having different functions.

There are many examples of large churches that have grown through a revival. But many churches also become unhealthy if their only goal is quantitative growth. In addition, as mentioned above, the Korean church is declining due to several factors. In that sense, the church needs to recognize the need for degrowth and focus on the essence of ministry. In addition, this paradigm shift is not a choice but a requirement of the times, the society, and the environment.

Now, the question is what is a small missional church?

In the organizational aspect of the church, small can mean several things:

First, a small missional church does not intend to be large. Ideally, the size of a church should grow naturally rather than intentionally through marketing or events. Often many evils arise when the intention to increase the number of members is the first and only goal of a church. When the church grows naturally, it can also choose to split and maintain its scale in smaller units.

Second, a small missional church focuses on the essence of the gospel. A missional church recognizes and practices mission as the essence of the church. The ultimate of the gospel is an indispensable basic standard.

Third, a small missional church avoids complex structures and has a simple system. Complex structures slow movement, and a simple decision-making structure can enable quick response.

Fourth, a small missional church cooperates with other missional churches. These churches are challenged by the shortage of human resource. In many cases the pastor is the sole leader or two or three people work in a team.

There are several advantages of being a small missional church:

A small missional church can respond directly to specific community issues such as caring for the Canaan Saints, and participating in social issues on the environment, peace, and human rights.

Due to globalization, it is predicted that pandemics will continue to occur in the future. This increases the need for small communities with organizational flexibility

A small missional church has a relatively simple crisis management structure. It is flexible about on-offline conversion, and relatively free of government restrictions on the number of people gatherings in a pandemic. It also has the advantage of providing individualized spiritual care online.

Although the Korean church has a history of more than 100 years, it can be evaluated as immature[6] *due to its egocentrism, conformism, secularism, and historical irresponsibility.*

The Korean church is being asked to mature from inside out. A small missional church is an alternative form of church community is suitable to progress the Korean church toward maturity as expected and required by society.

In Korea, many missional churches are currently emerging. One new form is through sharing worship space. Space sharing is becoming common place in the general society and worship space is also being shared by more churches. The following are cases of worship space sharing in the Korean church.

Case 1: Café Underwood

Cafe Underwood is located in the college town of Yonsei University. This cafe was started and operated by CCC (Campus Crusade for Christ) with the support of an entrepreneur. Then, in February 2020, two pastors planning a Chinese student-immigrant ministry were commissioned to manage the café.

While running a cafe and doing campus mission, they considered ways to use the café space for missional purposes. They saw that newly planted churches have difficulty finding space for worship and often do not have enough money to pay rent. The pastors therefore networked to provide gathering spaces for four churches at different time slots.

The churches are free to use the video and sound equipment in the cafe. They also share items such as a pulpit, a piano, and a donation box. Furthermore, they are considering ways in which they can collaborate. It is worth mentioning that the one-year-old church planted in this space recently decided to rent their own space and start a shared worship space to serve other churches. This church became the first fruit of Café Underwood's pioneering church incubation work.

Case 2: Co-Worship Station

Co-Worship Station is a shared church platform launched by Gimpo Myungsung Church to help small churches. They sold the previous church building and bought a new building for a shared chapel space and established Assist Mission as a missionary organization to operate the space. The Co-Worship Station started in one location but have now grown to three.

Assist Mission provides a location and takes responsibility for overall church administration, such as building management, video and sound equipment, and multimedia support personnel to provide a stable ministry setting. In particular, for the first year, the monthly rent and management fee is only about USD100. Pastors who share this space and its equipment also hold early morning prayers in union.

Cafe Underwood and Assist Mission's Co-Worship Station function as both a platform and an incubator. Shared worship space is becoming a new trend, and being recognized as a solution for the Korean church. In the Presbyterian Church of Korea, there was a recommendation on it at the General Assembly level, and presbyteries are starting to establish shared places of worship.

In an age of sharing rather than private ownership, sharing a place of worship is good news for small churches struggling with planting, financing, and pandemic response. In addition, small missional churches that share a space of worship can complement each other's weaknesses and maximize their strengths by forming partnerships. However, it is also necessary to reflect more deeply on why the place of worship should be shared.[7]

Megachurches that have been growing for a long time continue still exist as landmarks. However, churches starting anew now are not in the age and environment in which they can imagine growing into megachurches. In addition, the Korean church must take on social responsibility both internally and externally and mature for the benefit of the public.

The church membership in Korea will continue to rapidly decrease alongside the population decline. Furthermore, the number of the bi-vocational ministers is increasing. The small missional church is an inevitable trend in this situation. The Korean church must enter society and be reborn as a small missional church that goes and makes disciples (Matthew 28:19).

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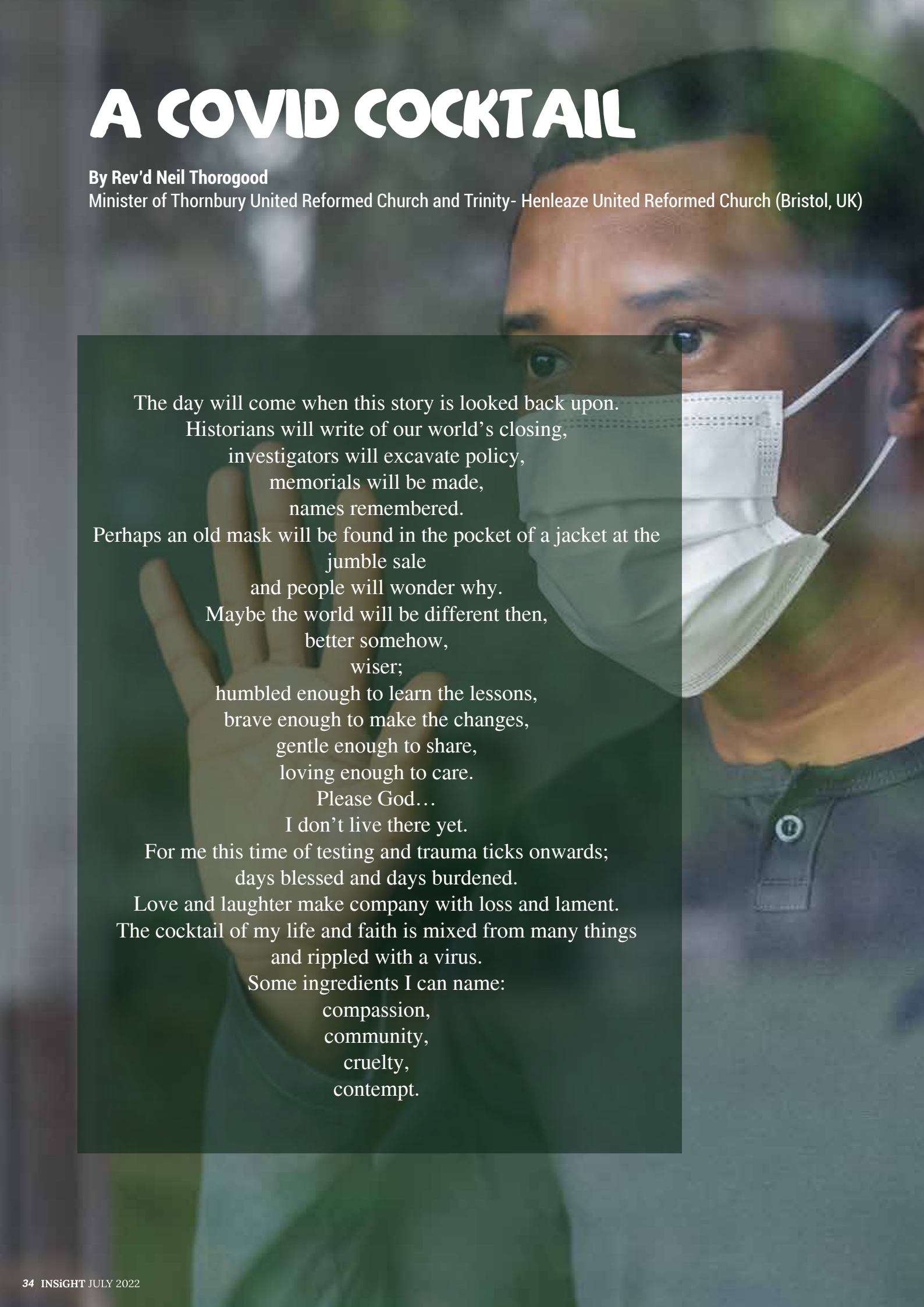
6 O-Kab Lee, 『한국교회, 신학에서 길을 열다』(The Korean Church, Opens the Way in Theology) (Gyeonggi-do: Han Dongnae, 2020), pp 103-32.

7 Kyoung Gyun, Han, "공유사회와 공유교회"(A Shared Society And A Shared Church), 『마을을 품고 세상을 살리는 교회』(A Church That Embraces The Village And Saves The World) (Seoul: PCK Books, 2021), pp166-67.

A COVID COCKTAIL

By Rev'd Neil Thorogood
Minister of Thornbury United Reformed Church and Trinity- Henleaze United Reformed Church (Bristol, UK)



The day will come when this story is looked back upon.
Historians will write of our world's closing,
investigators will excavate policy,
memorials will be made,
names remembered.
Perhaps an old mask will be found in the pocket of a jacket at the jumble sale
and people will wonder why.
Maybe the world will be different then,
better somehow,
wiser;
humbled enough to learn the lessons,
brave enough to make the changes,
gentle enough to share,
loving enough to care.
Please God…
I don't live there yet.
For me this time of testing and trauma ticks onwards;
days blessed and days burdened.
Love and laughter make company with loss and lament.
The cocktail of my life and faith is mixed from many things
and rippled with a virus.
Some ingredients I can name:
compassion,
community,
cruelty,
contempt.

COMPASSION

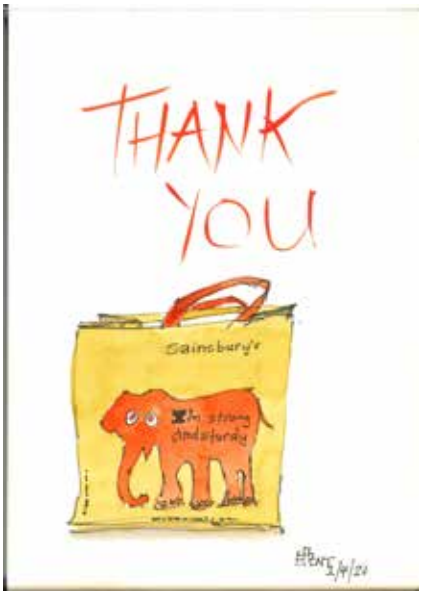
Compassion grew gradually and then, sometimes, flourished with the most beautiful, creative and fierce energy. From the outset, as the whispers grew of something happening in a place few of us could name on a map of China, we were offering our prayers. Intercession brought the virus and its consequences closer to our worship. I remember, living in Cambridge at the time, how posters appeared on the railings around King's College naming some of the medical staff grappling with events in Wuhan; noting sacrifice and death. We were starting to live into a truth we could not yet see or imagine.

With the glorious clarity of hindsight, I tremble now at my arrogance and self-sufficiency. As western Europe succumbed, we watched in stunned denial as entire health systems teetered on the brink of collapse. I know that things will have looked and felt very different in other parts of the world. The enormity and brutal reality were known and acted upon far sooner in other places; the resources far fewer, the suffering even greater. The United Kingdom, wrapped perhaps in some sense of island impregnability, came late to lockdowns and all the paraphernalia of pandemic combat. I remember people manufacturing face masks for hospital workers in their kitchens because supplies ran out early. There was chaos. Advice and rules changed and contradicted. So much was being improvised, made up, guessed. Life was free falling without a safety net. It came, and we weren't prepared at all. I wasn't.

Compassion came too. Mission needs compassion at its core. The mission I see Jesus incarnating is always making room for others in their need. They might be an imperial Roman officer desperate for a healing for another (Luke 7: 1-10). They could be a religious figure losing a daughter and a woman in a crowd longing for her bleeding and agonies to cease (Mark 5: 22-43). Jesus gets constantly interrupted by the brokenness and longing that is all around him. He gives and gives of himself into the turmoil of it all so that the gifts of God might reach. He settles deep into the realities and contexts to bless and heal and kindle hope. He comes close; divinity and humanity encountering so that each might be honoured.

Compassion flowed in many ways as we endured these many months. The scope of human goodness is boundless. Evangelism and theology can urge us to stress contrasts: life corrupt and hopelessly mired in sin awaiting the saving grace of Christ and the sanctification of the Holy Spirit. I know and love the song of our salvation. "But God proves his love for us in that while we still were sinners Christ died for us." writes Paul (Romans 5: 8). I believe it. Yet I also know the capacity of people to do good, to be kind, to help others. That was a beauty sewn into the destructive path of this pandemic.

I think of nurses holding phones to the ears of dying victims, fighting for every final breath, as they spoke a last word to loved ones banned from visiting. Care homes cradling the frail and elderly, swamped by virus and begging for more help than ever came. Families obeying rules, locking themselves away, seeking to create some sort of normality amidst the extraordinary. Rubbish collectors working on. Suddenly receiving letters meant much more, and we cheered the woman who delivered on our street as we huddled behind the window.



Plenty wondered where God was. Was this judgement? Was creation forsaken? Was this the glorious proof that faith is fiction and God lives in fairy tales?

Mission moves us to a different perspective. If humanity managed to be compassionate, we were labouring with the one who knew us all more intimately than we even know ourselves. Compassion flowed from God's heart to enfold a weeping, grieving, suffering world. Whatever the causes of this disaster, however much human arrogance, greed or error contributed, God's compassion enfolded us all. We lived in the Psalms: "Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil; for you are with me; your rod and your staff - they comfort me." (Psalm 23: 4). Trusting this truth in the light of this pandemic, mission means continuing to live into the world's great hurt, holding to God's abiding compassion, and offering all that we can to help and heal in company of others of good will. It also means the humility to learn that the Church has as much need of compassion within itself as beyond itself.

COMMUNITY

With so many avenues for human contact and sharing broken or banned, community took on all sorts of new dimensions. The pictures illustrating this article were a little response from me. I sketched daily during lockdown and flung pictures into the world via Twitter. I valued the outpouring of creativity that Twitter, YouTube and the like made possible; gatherings in the ether enjoying distance disappearing. Communities sprang up around laughter amidst so much to make us weep. I think of a sports commentator regularly commentating as he filmed his two dogs doing doggy things; glorious! Musicians compiled orchestras of the alone online.

Church community evolved. We went online to discover the delights of Zoom and to uncover potential we never knew existed and never quite believed we were capable of. So often, pre-pandemic, those too ill or infirm to come to worship had to make do with occasional visits and stories of church life after the event. All this changed. Worship, meetings and small groups all moved online and ways emerged to enable more participation. I found myself sharing weekly theological reflections and sermons via email and on screen for those with the technology and access and via paper copy delivered through the door for those without. This connectedness has continued after lockdowns ended and is now a staple of our congregational communities. It was a leap forward in access for many of us; a blessing amidst calamity.

Neighbourhoods found each other in fresh ways. We discovered, a few doors away, a couple who both had significant health conditions. Their vulnerability was great and their need to stay safe behind closed doors vital. We, with others on the street, started collecting their shopping, getting their prescriptions, offering messages of support as they endured. Across the world, communities responded, discovered, deepened and shared.

Mission needs to be rooted in community. Contexts matter. God is in love with contexts and cherishes communities. The story of Babel has God sending humanity outwards as diverse communities of many languages and cultures rather than huddling together in a monoculture on the plain of Shinar (Genesis 11: 1-9). Pentecost completes Babel's momentum. Instead of imperial Greek, the followers of Jesus are given by the Spirit of God the gifts of all the tongues of Jerusalem's cultural mosaic: "…each one heard them speaking in the native language of each." (Acts 2: 6). My prayer and hope is that we will continue to cherish and build community as never before after these months.

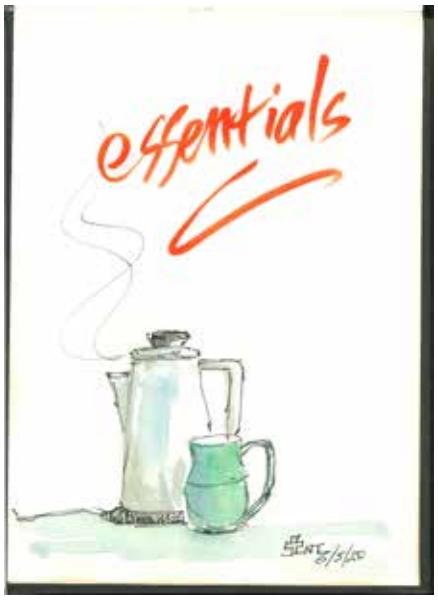
CRUELTY

The virus is cruel. Its impacts were and are incredibly cruel. Of course, the virus knows none of this. It simply reproduces, evolves and spreads from host to host because that is what it is for. It has proved itself highly successful. Previous viruses have done the same. We are warned to expect others. I pray we are better prepared! The scale of suffering, the burdens so many have carried and carry still, and the ways existing injustice and inequality made many more vulnerable haunt our world. The World Health Organisation's tracking tells us:

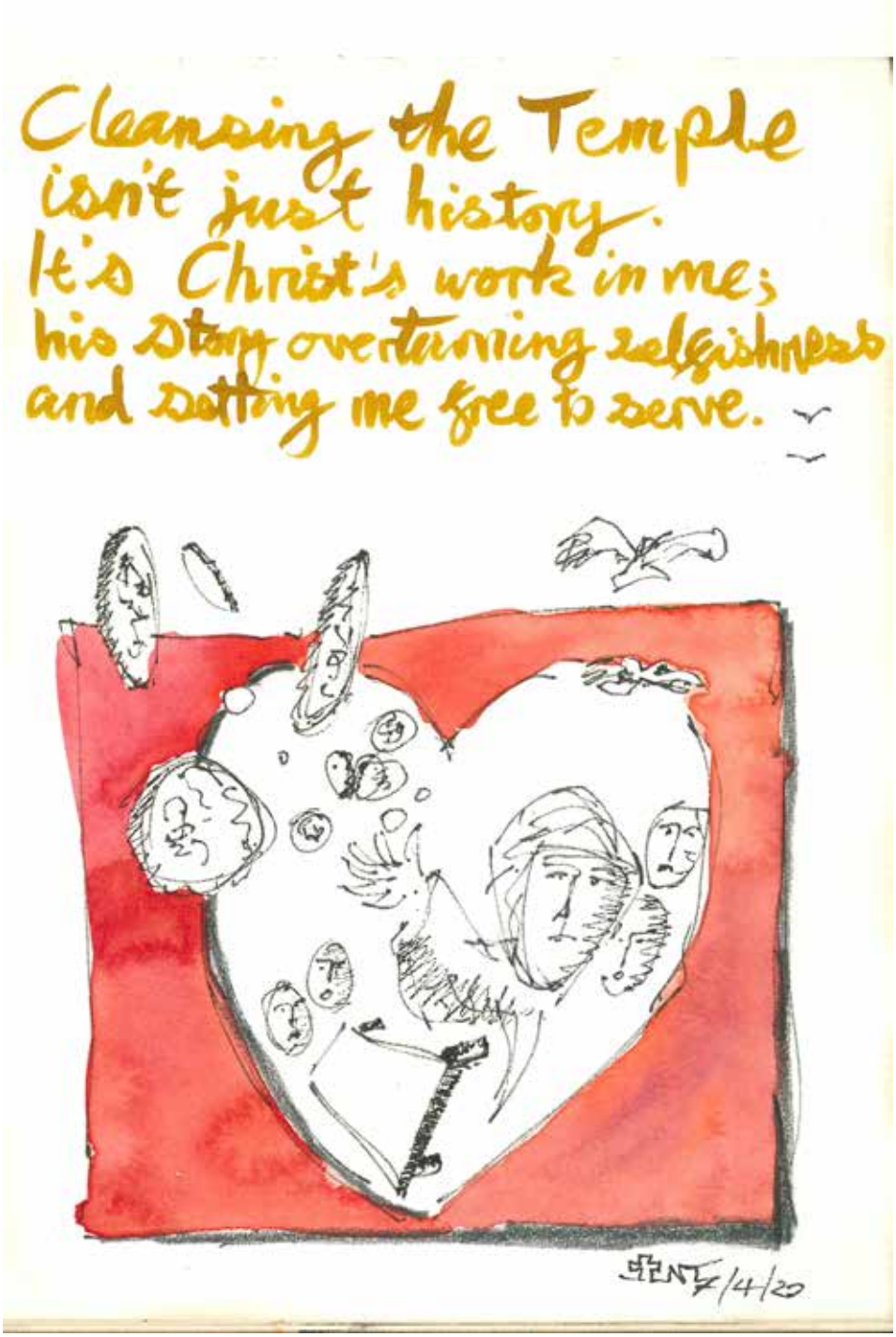
"Globally, as of 7:24pm CEST, 23 June 2022, there have been 539,893,858 confirmed cases of COVID-19, including 6,324,112 deaths, reported to WHO. As of 21 June 2022, a total of 11,912,594,538 vaccine doses have been administered." [1]

Suffering is skewed: "COVID-19 has exposed persistent inequalities by income, age, race, sex and geographic location. Despite recent global health gains, across the world people continue to face complex, interconnected threats to their health and well-being rooted in social, economic, political and environmental determinants of health… While high-resource settings have faced challenges related to overstretched capacity and fragmentation, weaker health systems risk jeopardizing hard-won health and development gains made in recent decades." [2]

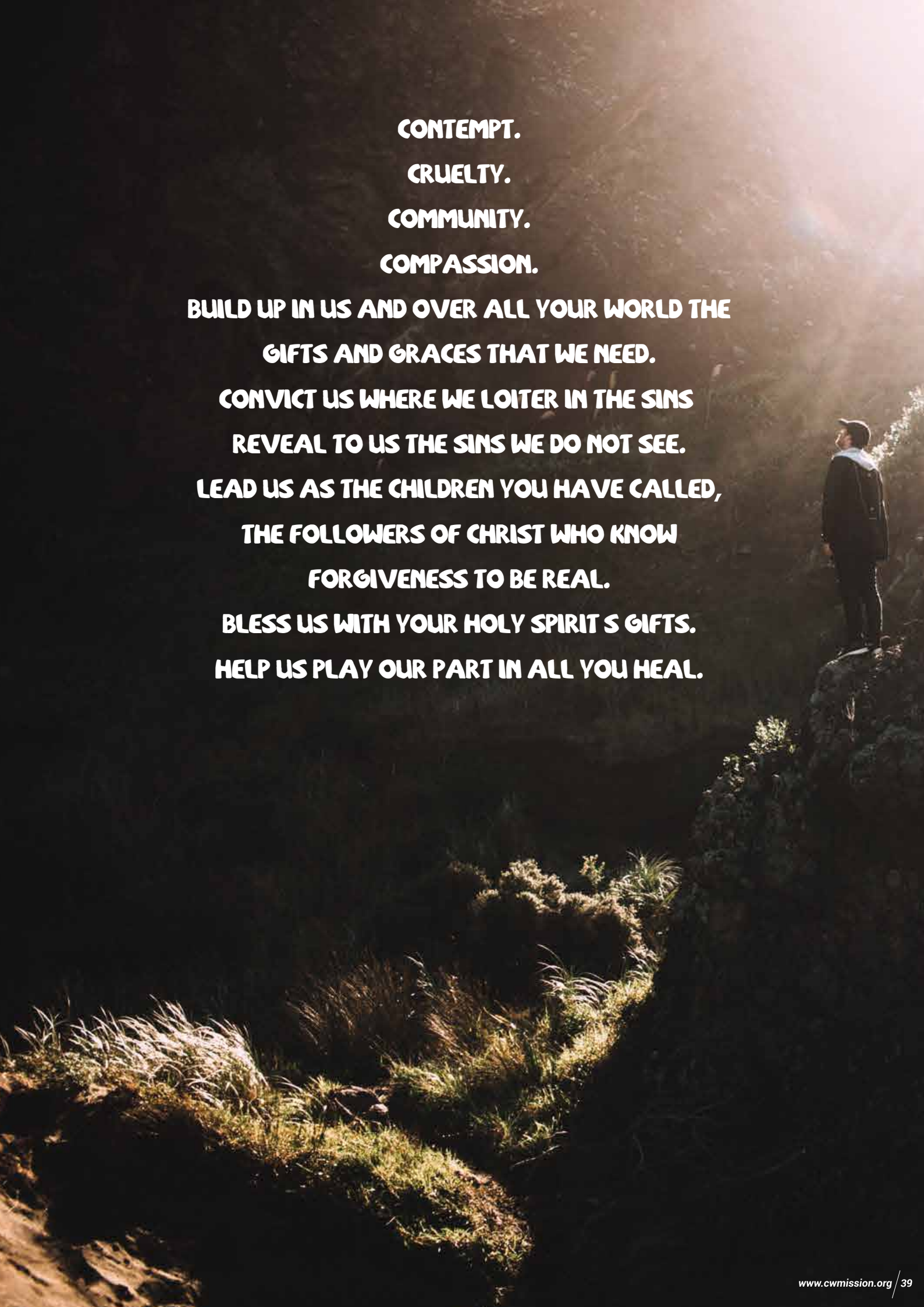
Cruelty was a counterpoint to compassion across the world. It revealed itself in ways big and small. On a global scale, the magnificent efforts to invent and distribute vaccines found a cruel counterpart in international hoarding of life-saving injections. In March, 2021, high income countries with just 16% of the world's population had procured for themselves half of the world's vaccine production. India, one of the world's biggest vaccine producers and key supplier to Covax (the major global



[1] WHO Coronavirus (COVID-19) Dashboard (https://covid19.who.int/), accessed 25th June 2022.
[2] https://www.who.int/news-room/spotlight/the-impact-of-covid-19-on-global-health-goals, accessed 25th June 2022.



Mission in the face of contempt for others, in the light of power and privilege being abused, must hold to truth. We need to be attentive to the evidence of what might be going wrong. Mission needs insight and resources to understand where the truth might be found and where the lies linger. In a world washed in the numbing waters of false news, the Church needs to celebrate and support those who uncover the truth and bring it to us. So much that damages and denies God's good intentions is rooted in human greed and our efforts to cover things up. Where there is contempt, mission evokes revelation and presses towards integrity and justice.



CONTEMPT.

CRUELTY.

COMMUNITY.

COMPASSION.

BUILD UP IN US AND OVER ALL YOUR WORLD THE GIFTS AND GRACES THAT WE NEED.

CONVICT US WHERE WE LOITER IN THE SINS

REVEAL TO US THE SINS WE DO NOT SEE.

LEAD US AS THE CHILDREN YOU HAVE CALLED,

THE FOLLOWERS OF CHRIST WHO KNOW

FORGIVENESS TO BE REAL.

BLESS US WITH YOUR HOLY SPIRIT S GIFTS.

HELP US PLAY OUR PART IN ALL YOU HEAL.

scheme to share vaccine equitably) halted all vaccine exports from April-October 2021 as the pandemic raged across India. Vaccine booster campaigns in high income countries have absorbed doses whilst low income nations await first injections.[3]

Cruelty could be as small as the choices made in the aisles of supermarkets. As the fear mounted, we saw a rush by some shoppers to hoard things. Suddenly the shelves were emptying. I remember there was no more toilet paper, flour, yeast. It got so bad so fast that we needed the innovation of security guards to police checkouts and rationing. We needed special opening hours for the elderly and front-line workers just so that they might get some essentials before the hoards plucked everything away. What is it about fear that turns us in upon ourselves rather than outwards in solidarity? Why did panic buying, a supremely selfish act, sweep the UK?

Mission must make us constantly vigilant to cruelty. We need to know ourselves and our communities, including our congregations, with the clear sight to see cruelty lurking. The scriptures attend to this so many times. David, the greatest of Israel's kings, abuses all his power to first take Uriah's wife, Bathsheba, and then have her husband killed to hide his adultery and her pregnancy. Nathan brings God's judgement to the palace. He spins a story of a rich man seizing a poor man's only lamb to provide hospitality for a visitor. David is outraged: "As surely as the Lord lives, the man who did this must die! He must pay for that lamb four times over, because he did such a thing and had no pity." "You are the man!" Nathan proclaims (2 Samuel 12: 1-25).

Our mission falters where injustice festers. Naming it within and amongst ourselves, we must be equally ready to unearth and combat it in the world. Cruelty denies shared humanity and affronts the God who cherishes all.

CONTEMPT

A strange moment unfolded in December 2021 when the UK Prime Minister's adviser, Allegra Stratton, was forced to resign having been filmed laughingly talking of parties in Downing Street in a mock press conference. We know now that she was simply hinting at a terrible truth; at secrets and lies we weren't ever meant to know. Slowly and with mounting damage, truth has been dragged out. Police and other investigations tell us that the heart of our government was probably the most law-breaking, lockdown-abusing, address in the country. The police have now issued 126 fines for illegal gatherings that were held on 8 different dates. Our Prime Minister and our Chancellor have been fined.

I have been deeply affected by it. I am enraged by it. Insult is added to injury when many in the Conservative Party, including plenty of government ministers, tell me to get over it. Why am I as angry as I am?

It is because I am being treated with utter contempt by the powerful. The contempt has many layers. It begins with people involved in setting strict rules choosing, many times, to bend them and break them to meet their own desires. Meanwhile, millions of us did not. We obeyed because we believed this was a shared battle and our individual actions contributed to a greater and shared good. I know a little bit of the staggering sacrifices made by those around me and with whom I ministered. I think of my own losses.

Having been treated with contempt in the initial acts, we found our intelligence treated with contempt in the efforts at distraction. Now, being told to "move on," further contempt poisons our public life. It is as if I am a fool to think this matters. But the ethics and conduct of those with power always matter; supremely. We're back with Nathan and David. We're guided by the whole arc of scripture; its leaning towards justice and integrity.

[3] UK Parliament, House of Commons Library, Briefing Note: Covax and global access to Covid-19 vaccines, Published Tuesday, 11 January, 2022 (https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/cbp-9240/), accessed 25th June, 2022.

RECONNECTED PIM STORIES

RISING TO LIFE:
Thoughts from Caribbean region

Rev. Dr. Michael Jagessar

Beyond the tourist myth of the Caribbean as 'paradise', is a constant struggle of 'rising to life' – to overcome or to 'overstand' the forces bent on denying fullness of life. This is not only about history. It is about the ongoing legacies currently seen in social, economic and political ills. One of the most indebted regions, the Caribbean's vulnerability is not by accident. It has been and is intentional: one borne both from centuries of extractive colonialism and international debt obligations that drain regional resources to fund the rich of other nations and within the Caribbean. The Caribbean is 'paradise lost' with the region struggling to emerge from the Covid-19 hurricane that battered Caribbean lives, economies, structures and spirit. What has never been lost, however, is the Caribbean ability to survive, overstand, overcome and (a)rise up always finding some space(s) to breathe before the next set of battering.

Yet in the face of such unrelentless onslaught against full and flourishing life for all in the Caribbean, it will boggle the mind to see and hear the stories of courage, compassion, openness, resilience, solidarity, hope and transformation. No wonder Philip Potter aptly described us as the "in spite of people and region". Caribbean peoples and churches know fully well what it means to rise up for their humanity – to arise from being labelled nobodies to affirm in style and tempo their humanity and distinctive some-body-ness. Faith and faithfulness, from the treasures of ancestral religions and the colonising mission of Christianity has been at the heart of such. We are here and will continue to be here however others wish to misrepresent, brush-off, and discard the region and its people.

Be it the Caribbean's gift of intellectuals that shaped Black Radicalism, Pan-Africanism, Non-Aligned Movement, Critical Cultural Studies, and post/decolonial overtures, or the many giftings from the region offered to sports, music, keeping churches alive in the Europe and North America, global, missional and ecumenical institutions, the Caribbean has been and continue to rise to the occasion. Our ancestors have been the 'rising up-people' and their progeny continue to embody that spirit.

So, from their lived experiences, ancestral stories, scriptures, faith and the scars they still carry what can we all learn from this 'corner of the world' about rising to life? Here are a few interrelated thoughts:

Let's begin with power. Power (more visible that we wish to admit) remains the cultural idol holding all hostage. It is the case inside church, mission and ecumenical organisations, as it is outside. We want to own it, to store it up, to expand it, to manipulate it for our purposes. Power has power over us. It is omnipresent. It lures and deceives us. The toughest challenge to rising to life is learning to let go, to give up spaces we have occupied which continue to deny others full and flourishing life. This may be why reparations become such a challenge. We are unable to repair because we cannot acknowledge, let go and give away. We wish to keep and if grudgingly to share it, it has to be among ourselves for in our interest. Hence, not surprisingly some are concerned about the "elite capture" of our good intentions of wishing to redress deficits. Caribbean people know this well. They also know that there another ways to counter this. This is the Jesus way which is an invitation to join-in the work of our giveaway God, with a new mathematics of redressing deficits where to gain is to lose and first will be last. This, though, is too upsetting and disruptive. We can 'talk the talk' of 'rising to life' exceptionally well, but when challenged to 'walk the talk' in reality the politics of power kicks in. Jesus is pushed into a corner, weeps and re-crucified.

Caribbean 'walkers of the Jesus way' love their bibles and when they read it they do so with 'realism'. So, they know from experience and the evidence around them that any 'rising to life' cannot, for them, underestimate the power of evil and its hold on us. Years ago, I read Jonathan Kozol's, Amazing Grace (2012). Kozol recounts a conversation with David a bright and promising young man living in the ghetto in NY South Bronx who cooked and cared for his mother who had AIDS.

"Evil exists," David says, not flinching at the word. "I believe that what the rich have done to the poor people in this city is something that a preacher could call evil. Somebody has power. Pretending that they don't so they don't need to use it to help people – that is my idea of evil." And "people who let other people be destroyed do evil. People who know but do not act do evil too".

What holds us captive is created and in place by a dehumanizing evil power which has to be exorcised and cast into the depths. Churches are not immune to this capture. Perhaps, this may be what Augustine and Luther had in mind when they referred to sin as incurvatus in se - being turned in or wrapped up in oneself so one cannot see the other or one's neighbour. So, the rising necessary (the corrective) will mean to bend that curvature back to a position (to rise and stand upright) where one can meet another's eyes and look into the humanness of our neighbour. Will we together and in partnership rise- up and upright so that all can flourish?

Rising to life must mean believing in a future and living in the present in ways which will not colonise such future. The afterlives of Caribbean people, following the brutality of enslavement, demonstrates the behaviour of an extractive colonial system and its elites who were unable to love our people, who could not see Caribbean people as fully human and who did not believe in flourishing life for all. This means a decolonial vision of hope and justice. To walk justly is to act out of a profound belief in a future that would end the inhumane project of strip-mining people of their humanity.

The Caribbean hope of what 'rising to life' must mean in practice has to be a commitment to the mobilisation of desire for justice. Hence, our work must continue to be powered by 'pleasure activism', the belief that justice and liberation must become the most pleasurable experiences we can have, and that we can already see some of its fruits in this life with some assurance that next generations will not inhabit an already colonised future.

What sort of ancestors we are going to be for our future generations?

Rev. Dr. Michael Jagessar is the Mission Secretary for CWM Caribbean Region.

A PRAYER FOR THOSE WHO SERVE...

Dear God of compassion and justice:

With you is the fountain of life; by your light we see light. In this desperate world, let the Partners-in-Mission of CWM be a beacon of hope in the countries and societies they are placed. Enable them as they carry your universal love to local communities, theological colleges, and churches. Capacitate them as they use their qualifications, gifts and experiences to contribute in their respective fields.

Where there is brokenness, let them bring healing. Where there is conflict, let them bring peace.
May they know your wisdom as they minister in times of international war, economic crisis and global pandemics.
Let those in cross-cultural ministry have sensitivity in their host contexts.

Please watch over their families, some of whom serve with them and others back at home. We give you thanks for their service which they have gone about at personal cost. May you always be their source of strength by which they strengthen others.

We lift up their health and well-being unto you and pray that they will always experience your protection, joy and unfailing peace as they usher in hope and healing in their respective contexts.

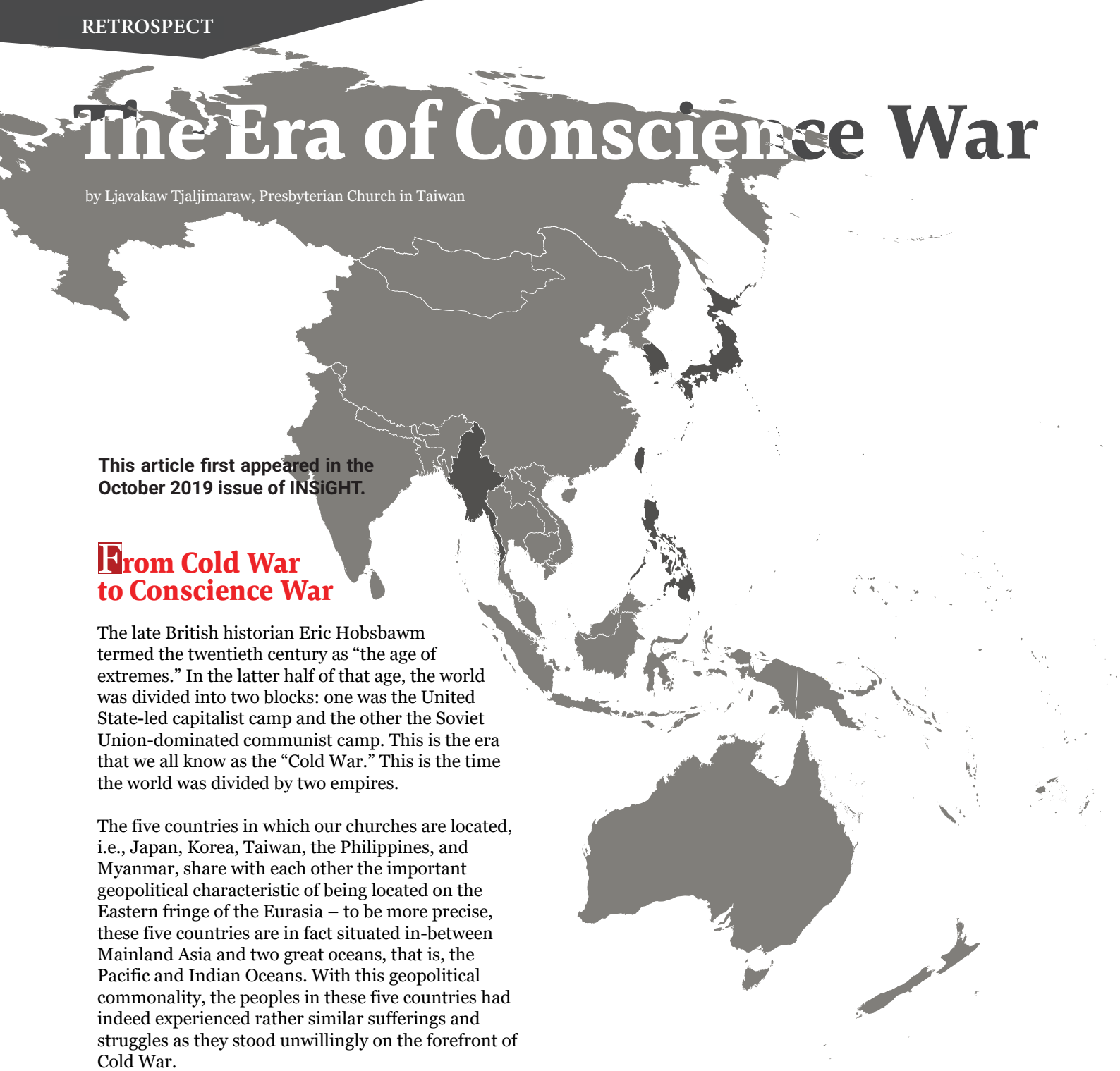
We ask this in Jesus' name, Amen.

Prayer by Mr. Stephen Chia, CWM Programme Associate

RETROSPECT

The Era of Conscience War

by Ljavakaw Tjaljimaraw, Presbyterian Church in Taiwan



This article first appeared in the October 2019 issue of INSiGHT.

From Cold War to Conscience War

The late British historian Eric Hobsbawm termed the twentieth century as "the age of extremes." In the latter half of that age, the world was divided into two blocks: one was the United State-led capitalist camp and the other the Soviet Union-dominated communist camp. This is the era that we all know as the "Cold War." This is the time the world was divided by two empires.

The five countries in which our churches are located, i.e., Japan, Korea, Taiwan, the Philippines, and Myanmar, share with each other the important geopolitical characteristic of being located on the Eastern fringe of the Eurasia – to be more precise, these five countries are in fact situated in-between Mainland Asia and two great oceans, that is, the Pacific and Indian Oceans. With this geopolitical commonality, the peoples in these five countries had indeed experienced rather similar sufferings and struggles as they stood unwillingly on the forefront of Cold War.

With the support of the United States, military dictatorships or authoritarian regimes that were infamous for their corruption and brutality were set up in Korea, Myanmar, the Philippines, and Taiwan in the name of containing communism, while the American-imposed democracy in postwar Japan soon ossified into the so-called "1955 System," which meant long-term domination by a right-wing conservative party.

In spite of the highly constrained world order in the Cold War, the peoples in the five countries worked hard for freedom, human rights, and democratisation. UCCJ, UCCP, PCM, PCK, PROK, and PCT were all involved into these hard-fought battles, and some even have played a significant role in facilitating and consolidating democracy in their respective countries.

In the wake of the breakdown of the Soviet Union, the world seemed to become more optimistic, believing that a new, much better world would come into being in a future not far away. Indeed, anti-communist authoritarianism could no longer find legitimacy for its continuation after the Soviet Union collapsed. Democratisation and the rotation of power began in the late 1980s, first in the Philippines and Korea, and subsequently Japan and Taiwan, and eventually in Myanmar. In this ongoing process, we devoted our energies to pursuing goals such as protection of the environment, respect of human rights, social-economic equality, and self-government for small nations or ethnic minorities. Our efforts were made in the belief that we were observing and fulfilling the will of God and, by doing so, enhancing the quality of our countries and improving the lives of our peoples.

[1] Representatives of UCCP, PCM, and PCK failed to attend this meeting held in Tokyo due to some reasons.

At the international level, we were also heady with optimism. Neoliberal politicians, economists, and globalisationists, particularly those who were based in the Wall Street and the Eastern and Western Seaboards of the United States, convinced us that the remaining communist regimes, of which China is the largest in size, could be transformed and brought into a greater partnership with the world if we brought them into the global capitalist system. Pro-globalisation neoliberals portrayed a rosy prospect where freedom would prevail as economic liberalisation spilled over and thus contributed to the realisation of the freedoms in other forms. Those who held this view were even given an innocent-sounding nickname: "Panda Huggers."

However, in spite of a promising start, things soon began to turn sour. Let me quote Matsuda Yasuhiro, a Japanese scholar of international relations from the University of Tokyo, who remarked that "there was a fantasy that after China became rich then the lower class will rise and democratisation would follow."

Today we cannot help but start to doubt our naivety in believing that communist China would become as innocuous as a panda. Take Taiwan as an example. Since the early 1990s when China was still under sanctions imposed by international society following the Tiananmen Square Massacre, Taiwan has been one of the most helpful and receptive countries in the world to give China open access to its economy and satisfy China's thirst for foreign aid, investments, and technologies.

How has Taiwan been repaid by China? Today, Taiwan is still targeted by thousands of Chinese missiles and still unfairly and unjustly barred from participating in most international organisations, including the United Nations and the World Health Organization (WHO), simply because of pressure from China. The even more heartbreaking, and indeed inhumane, reality is that each time Taiwan faces a disaster or emergency, for example, the major earthquake in 1999, the outbreak of the fatal disease SARS in 2003, and Typhoon Morakot in 2009, China tried every means to impede or delay international groups providing relief, rescue, or medical cooperation from entering Taiwan until they submitted to China's political claim that Taiwan is part of China, which was obviously irrelevant to task of saving lives.

Regrettably, the bright outlook at the end of the Cold War has not come true. The reality is that we are not facing an innocent and friendly panda, but an out-of-control Frankenstein risen from the ruins of communism and sustained by state-sponsored slave labour.

In our terminology, we use the concept of "empire" to refer metaphorically to a variety of oppressive, life-denying powers or regimes. But this term has become literally true when we describe this Frankenstein empire. Neither China's economy nor environment are sustainable in the long run, but Xi Jinping has now constitutionally ensured that his leadership will last indefinitely. Now only death can separate Xi from the presidency, and China has in reality become an empire under the unconstrained rule of an emperor for life.

In recent years, we have heard our brothers' and sisters' bloods cry out to God from the ground under the rule of the empire. The sounds of their cries have become louder and louder, so that no one can remain unperturbed by them.

Listen! Our Brothers' and Sisters' Bloods Cry out to God from the Ground...

Uyghurs, Tibetans, Trafficked Brides, Christians, and Missionaries

Cries come from Uyghurs in Xinjiang. More than one million Uyghur Muslims are currently imprisoned in the so-called "re-education camps," a modern-day equivalent of concentration camps, where they are subject to around-the-clock brainwashing and torture, or even death. Female survivors of the camps said they were given unknown drugs and injections that made them sterilised. Children have died on the streets because their parents were detained in camps. Uyghurs, following the members of Falun Gong and other dissidents, have become the main source of organ harvesting in China. In Xinjiang's airports, "Green Channels for Human Organs" have been established to ensure that the transportation of organs can be done as speedily as possible.

Cries come also from Buddhists in Tibet. Over the past decade, more than 150 Tibetan monks have set themselves on fire to protest China's repression of their beliefs and culture. Cries come from the teenage brides trafficked to China from Myanmar, Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos, Indonesia, and Pakistan.

Cries come also from house-church Christians. They have witnessed crosses torn down, bibles burned, churches harassed, raided, or shut down, ministers arrested, and believers put in jail. Among these suffering Christians, more than one thousand Korean missionaries were deported between 2013 and 2017, and many churches established by these missionaries were shut down. In 2018, another two Korean missionaries were arrested in the city of Wenzhou and their church searched by the authorities. Other than Koreans, nineteen Japanese Christians were held in China and later deported to Japan in 2017, and another twenty-one Japanese Christians were arrested in 2018.

Falun Gong Exhibition against Organ Harvesting

Protesters brave heavy rain as they march against the 2019 Hong Kong extradition bill on Sunday, August 18, 2019. Photo by Studio Incendo

Listen! Our Brothers' and Sisters' Bloods Cry out to God from the Ground...

As history attests though, a repressive dictatorship rarely constrains its suppression within its own borders. Just ask Hong Kong, which was promised "one country, two systems" but actually got nothing but lip service. Over the last two decades, the world has witnessed how Hong Kong's democratic progress has been blocked, the basis of the rule of law and good governance in Hong Kong undermined, Hongkongers' freedom of speech eroded, and the credibility of Hong Kong as a global financial city destroyed.

The influx of massive politically-driven capital flight and immigration from China into Hong Kong has degraded socio-economic conditions, triggering a new wave of emigration from Hong Kong. Hong Kong has quickly become a place that is unliveable for Hongkongers, especially for its young people. However, in the recent anti-extradition bill protests, it was young Hongkongers who showed the most impressive fortitude and courage to protect their city. For this, how were they treated?

First one million citizens, then two million went out onto the street to voice their demands, but the Hong Kong government dared not to respond positively under pressure from Beijing. Out of desperation, eight young people committed suicide as martyrs in protest against the tyranny. A first-aid nurse was shot in the right eye by the police, while another seven suffered the same brutality and will lose their sight forever. Around a dozen people were allegedly killed by the police on the street or in metro stations, some of them were later claimed to have "committed suicide" by jumping from buildings or into the sea. Another eighty were seriously injured by gangsters with the connivance of the police, more than two thousand arrested and beaten, and more than one thousand prosecuted. Countless more were injured or exiled.

Most shockingly, many of the women arrested were sexually abused and harassed by the police. This also happened when Koreans and Taiwanese were fighting for democratisation. The police did this on purpose to humiliate these young women and deter them from taking the streets again. Any decent person will tremble with anger when hearing about this shameful treatment that Hongkongers were subjected to.

Military Expansion

Authoritarian expansionism does not stop at Hong Kong. China is brandishing its fist like never before. Chinese ships routinely patrol around the Senkaku Islands, Taiwan Strait, and the Spratly Islands. It has also deployed advanced anti-ship and anti-air missiles on military bases constructed on artificial islands. China's intention is apparent. In Beijing's strategic consideration, the East China Sea, Taiwan Strait, and the West Philippine Sea, which currently serve as international waters where all countries of the world enjoy freedom of navigation, should be converted into China's inland seas where the freedom of navigation is allowed only for Chinese ships and others approved by Beijing. By claiming these three important waters as its inland seas, China can extend its military power to half of the Pacific, a strategic aim which Chinese President Xi Jinping has reiterated: "The Pacific Ocean is big enough to accommodate both China and the US."

Debt Diplomacy

Authoritarian expansionism does not appear simply in military form. China is manipulating so-called "debt diplomacy" to expand its influence through the two paths widely known as "One Belt, One Road." By offering hundreds of billions of dollars in infrastructure loans to governments from Asia to Africa to Europe, China is inducing these developing, and mostly non-democratic, countries to take on massive debt to allow Chinese state companies to build facilities such as seaports, airports, railways, highways, power plants, and so on that are of questionable commercial value and not affordable. The case of Sri Lanka is typical. Three years ago, Sri Lanka was forced to handover a Chinese built port because its government could no longer afford payments for the project. This port has now become a forward military base for Chinese navy. Even worse than that, these massive loans are often delivered to the targeted countries through use of corrupted local politicians as brokers, worsening existing domestic divisions and even triggering civil war or ethnic cleansing between rival groups.

TAIWAN not CHINA, TAIWAN be TAIWAN. Photo by ©Tim Maddog

Learn a Lesson from Taiwan's Suffering and Struggling

Taiwan is a textbook case that demonstrates how China is exporting democratic crisis to surrounding countries. More precisely, China is trying every means to overthrow Taiwan's democracy. The Hong Kong protestors have repeatedly sent a warning signal to Taiwan with the slogan "Today's Hong Kong, Tomorrow's Taiwan," which means what is happening in Hong Kong now may be Taiwan's fate in the future.

I believe Hongkongers' warning should be taken seriously not only by Taiwan but also by all neighbouring countries. It is not difficult to imagine that today's Taiwan will be tomorrow's Korea, tomorrow's Japan, tomorrow's Philippines, or tomorrow's Myanmar if China's authoritarian expansionism is allowed to run its course.

As we Taiwanese stand at the forefront of resisting this authoritarian expansionism, I feel obligated to warn our neighbours of this new form of comprehensive and multi-dimensional warfare and hope you may learn from what we Taiwanese are suffering and struggling against.

Local Politicians

Over the last decade, China had aggressively bought off Taiwan's local politicians, from city mayors to members of local councils and even down to chiefs of villages, through a variety of channels, such as expenses-paid tours to China, subsidies, privileges, franchises for doing business in China, agricultural purchases, donations to local cultural events or festivals, religious exchanges and so on. By doing so, China is systematically influencing the political views of local politicians in China's favour, and in elections they have been effectively turned into agents that mobilise grassroots voters for pro-China candidates.

Media

To widen its influence on more diverse strata of Taiwan society, the Communist Party has instructed business owners with strong China connections to buy media outlets that enjoy nation-wide coverage in Taiwan and turn them into mouthpieces and propaganda outlets for Beijing. TV news programs and talk shows are used as weapons to attack the Taiwanese government and as brainwashing propaganda to promote pro-China politicians twenty-four hours a day.

Of course, China has not overlooked local broadcasting companies and emerging social medias. Disinformation launched by the Chinese cyber army can be found everywhere on these platforms. Although Facebook and YouTube are strictly forbidden within China, the Chinese cyber army has recently purchased hundreds, if not thousands, of popular Facebook fan pages and YouTubers as a means to influence the younger generation. Fake news and deliberately misleading information are created with the intent to create chaos and sow division within Taiwan society.

Chinese soldiers browse online news on desktop computers at a garrison of the People's Liberation Army in Chongqing in 2013. (AP/Gao Xiaowen)

Last September, as our Japanese friends may remember, a senior Taiwanese diplomat working in the Osaka Office of the Taiwan Embassy in Japan committed suicide after he was defamed by an internet rumour which quickly became headline news on around-the-clock TV news programs and talk shows for several days. This rumour claimed that the Taiwan Embassy did nothing to help hundreds of Taiwanese tourists trapped in Kansai Airport by Super Typhoon Jebi, and instead it was the China Embassy that sent fifteen buses to rescue them. The result of this disinformation was a tragic and even criminal loss of life.

Academics

China also exerts pressure on academia and tries to silence or buy off scholars. Universities, colleges, departments, research centres, think tanks, and even individual professors and students have been contacted through a variety of academic activities and exchanges, and many of them have even been drawn in with grants, cooperation plans, or job recruitment offered by the Chinese government or universities.

While the funding offered by Beijing is often very generous, the unmentioned precondition is to observe self-censorship by avoiding even mentioning ideas or issues that the Chinese government finds dangerous or offensive. As you all know, the Communist Party is sensitive to so many things that you can hardly avoid them. Issues related to the "three Ts" – Tiananmen, Tibet, and Taiwan – are the most strictly forbidden. Another "T" – East Turkestan – can now be added to this list. All China experts, regardless of nationality, know that their visas will be delayed or denied if their research diverges from Beijing's propaganda. What is worse, Beijing has consciously fostered academic institutions' and individual scholars' psychological addiction to and financial dependency on funding from China.

We all know that only academics of integrity can benefit our countries and peoples. But how can they be fair and honest if they are in a constant state of unease that China may withdraw funding from their research projects?

Business Circles

Beijing also holds hostage businesses that have bet the lion share of their profits on China. The tourism industry is a classic case of this. The tourism industry includes a variety of businesses that involves a large amount of domestic investment and employment, such as hotels, transportation, restaurants, resorts, recreation parks, shopping malls, local specialty stores, scenic spots, tourism services, and so on. It is very difficult for these tourism businesses to refuse easy money from Chinese tourists once they are allowed to flood in. As soon as the dependency on Chinese tourists is created, the tourism industry became vulnerable to China's unrestricted warfare that actually deploys Chinese tourists as a political weapon. By simply threatening to limit the "export" of Chinese tourists, Beijing can easily turn the industrial chain of tourism into a huge lobby group that leverages domestic policy and politics in China's favor.

The same political-economic manipulation applies to China's agricultural purchases. Believing the false commitments to buy a large amount of agricultural and aquafarming products, many farmers and fishers in Taiwan have suffered from over-investment and even technology-theft.

The political-economic warfare is also waged against foreign companies that have operations in China. Our Korean friends might remember the Flag Incident involving Chou Tzu-yu, who comes from Taiwan and became a leading member of the K-pop girl group Twice.

One of the largest Korean entertainment companies, JYP Entertainment, forced Tzu-yu, under the pressure from China, to apologise and confess her "mistake" in a video uploaded to YouTube in the same way that ISIS treated its captures, simply because she previously identified herself as a Taiwanese in a Korean TV program.

Our Hong Kong friends will also be familiar with the recent incident where shops selling Taiwanese bubble tea, which seems to have become popular in Japan too, were forced to openly declare that they supported China's "One Country, Two Systems" policy on Hong Kong and opposed the demands of Hongkongers, simply because one of those shops in Hong Kong expressed sympathy with Hongkongers' cause and responded to calls for a shopkeeper's strike.

These threats have been wielded not only against small companies, but also big companies like airlines. Last year, twenty airlines, including Japan Airlines, All Nippon Airways, Philippine Airlines, and Korea's second-largest Asiana Airlines, caved to Chinese pressure to rename Taiwan as "Taiwan, China." In doing so, they were creating the worrying precedent of letting China dictate new international norms – in this case regarding Taiwan's status – by threatening the airlines with a drop in the number of Chinese passengers.

Tibetan People Demand ~ Remember Tiananmen Remember Tibet in NYC on the 20th Anniversary of June 1989 Massacre in Beijing, China. Photo by SFT HQ (Students for a Free Tibet)

Am I My Brothers' and Sisters' Keeper? (Genesis 4: 9-10)

The humanitarian crises experienced by small nations under Chinese rule and the democratic crises that China is exporting to the world, in whatever form they have appeared, have our conscience under interrogation. The world is once again approaching a crossroads. However, this is not a repeat of the Cold War, nor what scholars of international relations call the "New Cold War" or "Cool War." In my view, we are actually entering the era of "Conscience War" when the bloods of Uyghurs, Tibetans, Hongkongers, and so many unnamable cry out to God from the ground.

We hear the cries, and we see the innocents crucified at the cross erected by a contemporary empire. While Falun Gong has accused the empire of being "an unprecedented evil on this planet" and young Hong Kong protestors slammed it as "Chinazi," a new term combining "China" and "Nazi," our churches seem to hesitate to call it out or to help and show solidarity to those who are suffering from the empire.

We must fear the Lord who may ask us as He had asked Cain: "Where are your brothers and sisters?" We might harden our hearts as Cain did to reply: "I don't know. Am I my brother's keeper?" Dare we reply: "Am I the Uyghurs' keeper?" "Am I the Tibetans' keeper?" "Am I the underground Christians' keeper?" "Am I the Hongkongers' keeper?" "Am I the Taiwanese's keeper?" "Am I the trafficked brides' keeper?" "Am I the Korean and Japanese missionaries' keeper?"

Let's Wash Our Hands as Pilatus Did? (Matthew 27: 24)

Let's take water, wash our hands in front of the world, and say, "Our hands are clean of Uyghurs' blood, Tibetans' blood, underground Christians' blood, Hongkongers' blood, trafficked brides' blood, and probably Taiwanese's blood in the near future. It's China's responsibility. It's all the Chinese government's responsibility."

Is it legitimate for us to do that? One thing we should always bear in mind: Hitler did not kill six million Jews by himself but by utilising a super-efficient military-bureaucratic machine. Neither did Xi Jinping build the concentration camps, set off tear gas, and crack down churches and temples by himself. It took a huge military-bureaucratic machine to accomplish all these things.

Thirty years ago, China was one of the poorest countries in the world and the Chinese economy was on the verge of a breakdown. However, over the last two decades, China's military expense has become equivalent to that of that of the combined expenditure of the remaining Asian countries, and it spends even more per year on so-called "maintaining stability," which actually means suppressing Uyghurs, Tibetans, Hongkongers, and many other dissidents and innocents.

Then, the question follows: how has this huge military-bureaucratic machine been built and run?

The inconvenient fact is that we help build this mass-killing machine and keep fueling it, even thought that was not our intention. China is now the top trading partner with many countries. The five countries in which our churches are placed are no exceptions. Korea, Japan, Taiwan, the Philippines, and Myanmar all have China as its top trading partner.

When looking from China's perspective, you will see these five countries have remained in the list of China's top ten trading partners over the last decade. Just take a look at China's top ten trading partners by country in 2010: unsurprisingly, the United States ranked first, while Japan was placed second, followed by Hong Kong in third place, Korea in fourth place, and Taiwan in fifth place. This ranking by country of China's top ten trading partners has largely remained unchanged over the last decade.

In 2014 the United States was replaced by the European Union in first place; Hong Kong, Japan, Korea, and Taiwan ranked in order from fourth place to seventh place; the most conspicuous thing was that ASEAN, in which the Philippines and Myanmar are included, was ranked in third place.

It is fair to say that this "China Empire" could not develop and run its huge military-bureaucratic machine without the inflow of aid, investment, trade, and technology from our governments, companies, universities, and even churches. And we keep fueling this machine by doing business with China while turning a blind eye, consciously or unconsciously, to this inconvenient fact.

The inconvenient fact is that we helped build the military-bureaucratic machine that is used by China to do very evil things. And we keep funding this machine, otherwise it could not run for one more second.

The inconvenient fact is that the money you spend on any item of made-in-China clothing bought in a department store could be turned into a brick that is used to build the concentration camps in Xinjiang.

The inconvenient fact is that the profit generated from any cargo of made-in-China shoes shipped to your country could be appropriated to manufacture a tank that patrols the streets of Tibet.

The inconvenient fact is that the cost of any item of consumer electronics you bought for yourselves and your children could help make the tear gas that has been set off in the metro stations of Hong Kong.

We must fear the Lord who will ask, "What have you done? Listen! Your brothers' and sisters' blood cries out to me from the ground." We have to confess that we all have a stake in that evil and we have our brothers' and sisters' blood on our hands. We have to confess, and we have to do something to redeem the debts we owe to our brothers and sisters.

A man passes by a symbol reading 'Made in China 2025' during a manufacturing expo on November 29, 2018 in Shanghai, China. (Photo by VCG via Getty Images)

Moral Obligation and Just Courage to Be on God's Side

I would like to share you with a successful example set by our forerunners, a beautiful story of how our churches showed solidarity with suffering people.

Half a century ago in the 1970s, the United States carried out its opportunistic Kissingerian diplomacy to switch diplomatic ties from Chiang Kai-shek's so-called "Free China" exiled in Taiwan to Mao Zedong's Communist China in Beijing. At that time, the Taiwanese people were in state of a great anxiety that Taiwan might be misused as a gift sacrificed in a Machiavellian trade between the United States and Communist China.

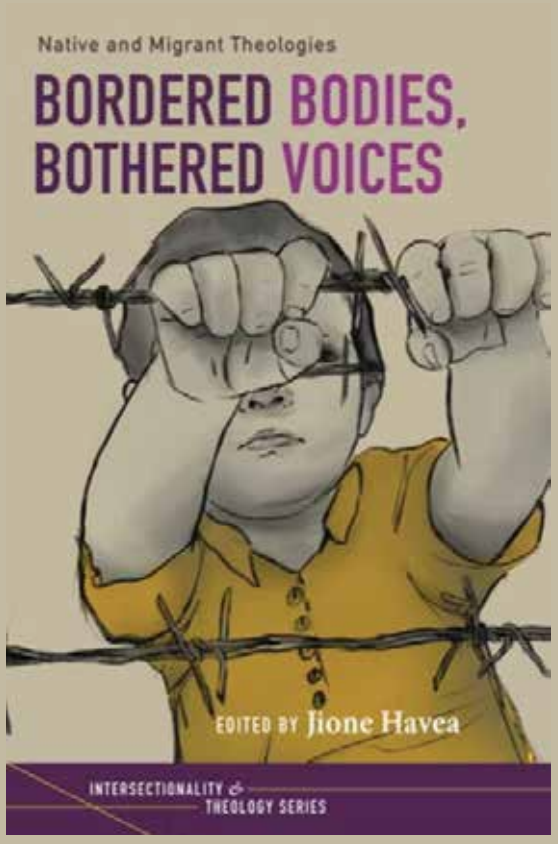
It was in this critical juncture that the PCT came forward at real risk to their lives of those involved to speak for the then 15 million Taiwanese people who were terrified and silenced by the White Terror of Chiang Kai-shek's "Free China" regime. The PCT published three declarations in succession as a distress signal to all nations and churches in the world.

In confessing "that Jesus Christ is Lord of all mankind," and in believing "that human rights and a land in which each one of us has a stake are gifts bestowed by God," the PCT appealed to the countries concerned, in particular the then American President Carter, and to all churches throughout the world, requesting them to take effective steps to "uphold the principles of human rights while pursuing the normalisation of relationships with Communist China and to insist on guaranteeing the security, independence, and freedom of the people of Taiwan."

The then General Secretary of PCT Rev. Ko Chùn-bêng, together with some other church members, were imprisoned by the so-called "Free China" government for publishing the three declarations and sheltering leaders of democratic movement. But it was indeed heartwarming and encouraging that the distress call was answered by overseas bodies such as the Vatican, the Department of State of the United States, World Vision, the Presbyterian Church in Canada, the NCCJ, and many other our partner churches. It was with the valuable solidarity offered by our partners and the just courage showed at this critical time that the Taiwanese people were able to make a narrow escape from being crucified once again at the cross of international power games.

Today, Taiwan is no longer Chiang Kai-shek's "Free China," but the Taiwanese people's Taiwan. Taiwan is no longer the "Orphan of Asia," but the democratic David standing in front of the imperialist Goliath. As written in the Bible, the small but valiant David was not alone. Behind David stood the army of Israeli, the chosen people of God. As the "Conscience War" is going to be worldwide, and as Taiwan stands at the forefront of resisting the empire against humanity, we once again request earnestly for your solidarity out of your conscience in faith and the just courage to be on God's side.

TAKE A LOOK



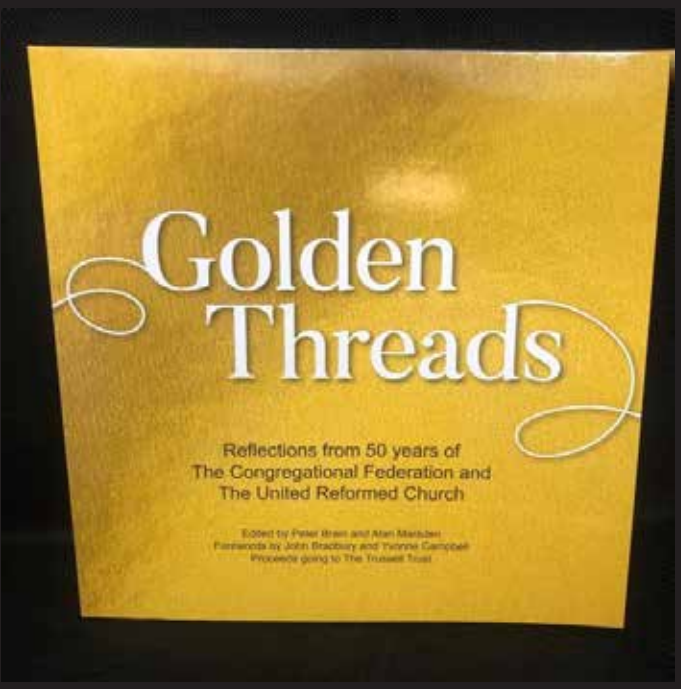
Book launch: Bordered Bodies, Bothered Voices

edited by Jione Havea

Theologies are constructed in and from lived contexts, and contexts are shaped by borders. While borders are barriers, they are also steppingstones for crossing over and invitations for moving further. This book offers theological and cultural reflections from the intersections of borders (real and imagined), bodies (physical, cultural, religious, ideological, political), and voices (that endorse as well as talk back). With and in the interests of natives and migrants, the authors of this book embrace bordered bodies and stir bothered voices.

The essays are divided into four overlapping clusters that express the shared drives between the authors--Noble borders: some borders are not experienced as constricting because they are seen as noble; Negotiating bodies: bodies constantly negotiate and relocate borders; Troubling voices: bothered voices cannot be muted or silenced; Riotous bodies: embracing the wisdom in and of rejected and wounded bodies is a riot that this book invites. The authors engage their subjects out of their experiences as migrants and natives. This book is thus a step toward--and an invitation for more work on--migrant and native theologies.

Visit https://bit.ly/3O8iAlr for more information.



Golden Threads

Published by both the United Reformed Church (URC) and the Congregational Federation (CF)

Published by both the United Reformed Church (URC) and the Congregational Federation (CF) to mark the 50th anniversaries of both denominations, this new book gathers reflections from ministers and other eyewitnesses from the churches' formation in 1972 to the recent pandemic.

Many of these reflections are personal stories of where the contributors were as the churches went their separate ways. They also include examples of how enriching the experience of working together has been.

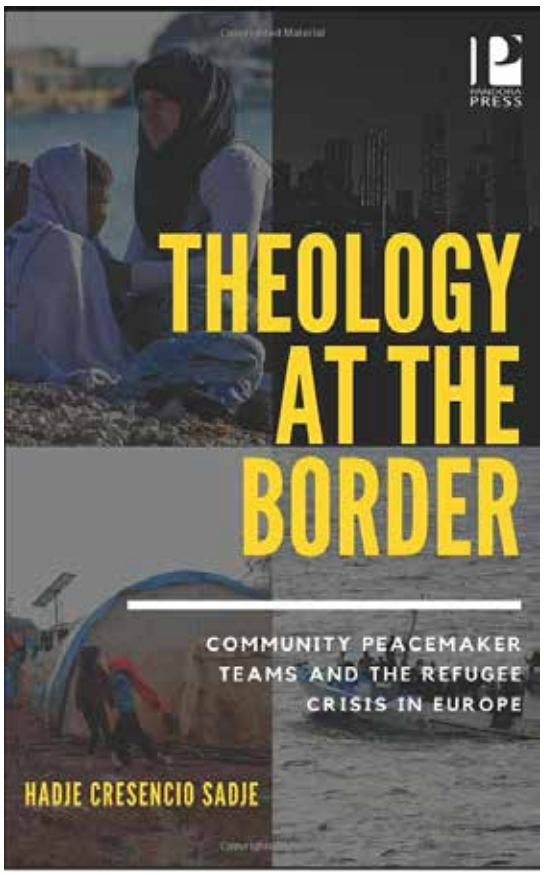
'Working with others often means we have to stretch our minds and precepts somewhat; this can be difficult but also brings a joy in collaboration when it simply seems right. Surely that, in turn, would be joyous to God.'
Mark Tubby, Weoley, Dovercourt, URC.

Not all the reflections look backwards. 'We are at a crossroads as a people, as a church and in our life on the planet. We have an opportunity to be the reformation in which we believe.' ***Heather Whyte, Rodborough & Painswick, URC.***

'My prayer for this publication is that it fills your heart with hope and sparks your heart to action,' writes the ***Congregational Federation General Secretary, Yvonne Campbell***, in the book's foreword.

Proceeds from the book will go to the Trussell Trust, whose network of foodbank provides emergency food and support to people in crisis.

Visit https://bit.ly/3yEqflN for more information.



Following its change in name from Christian Peacemaker Teams to Community Peacemaker Teams, CPT Europe places significant theologically-informed emphases on political, economic, and public policy advocacy. The identity of CPT Europe differs markedly from traditional theological and pastoral approaches, but does not preclude theological interpretations of its work.

This booklet explores how CPT Europe's work can inform a contextually sensitive, socially relevant, and liberating form of Christian faith that is immersed in the everyday lives of people, especially refugee lives. Although it is not solely a Christian organization, the work of CPT rests on a strong theological affirmation of immersion as a concrete approach to doing theology at the borders of this world. The work of CPT Europe shows how theological reflection at the borderland should not remain academic exercise, but instead it ought to emerge in the context of common people, especially the poor, the vulnerable, and the oppressed.

Theology at the Border: Community Peacemaker Teams and the Refugee Crisis in Europe *By Hadje Cresencio Sadje*

In brief, this booklet argues that theology cannot be done without taking lived realities into account, and it demonstrates this conclusion by showing how CPT Europe provides a paradigm for doing theology – seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, and touching God – at the borderland.
Praise for Theology at the Border

Hadje Cresencio Sadje's perspective on CPT-Europe's work with refugees at Lesbos starts with the assumption that theology is rightly formed by encounters at the margins – particularly in distressed places where Christ is found among "crucified people" – rather than theology being brought to such encounters from outside. Theology at the Border is focused on seeing/hearing/touching God, and it begins where faith both confronts human realities and is shaped by them. In this book, experience contextualizes and shapes one's perspective on God, and not the other way around. This is what the immersive work of CPT-Europe does, and although that work involves many mundane tasks, as these tasks are accomplished theology takes shape and hearts are changed.
–Reverend Dr. Tricia Gates Brown, editor of Getting in the Way: Stories from Christian Peacemaker Teams, author of Jesus Loves Women: A Memoir of Body and Spirit, and author of ReligionMatters.substack.com

Hadje Sadje presents a provocative view that God of the poor, marginalized, and displaced is involved in their everyday struggles. In a theologically engaging manner, Sadje's Theology at the Border displays how the Christian community should be at the forefront of the fight for human dignity and social justice, especially in response to the global migration and refugee crisis. This booklet is a must-read for clergy and concerned Christian seeking to proclaim and embody God's Good News for the broken and damaged world.
–Reverend Samuel Lee, Director of Center for Theology of Migration, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, and Founding President of Foundation Academy of Amsterdam, The Netherlands.

For more information or to purchase, please visit https://www.amazon.com/dp/1926599756

THE JANES

The Janes, an HBO-produced Sundance entry, tells the tale of a group of unlikely outlaws from Chicago. These women risked their lives to run the Jane Collective, an underground network using code names, fronts, and safe houses to help women obtain safe, affordable illegal abortions between 1969 and 1973, the year the supreme court guaranteed a woman's right to an abortion in Roe v Wade. Directed by Oscar-nominee Tia Lessin and Emmy-nominee Emma Pildes, it offers first-hand accounts from many who are speaking on the record for the first time.

https://bit.ly/3z1QuEj

"WE WILL WIN" THROUGH THE EYES OF UKRAINIANS AT WAR LIFE UNDER SIEGE

As the conflict in Ukraine rages on, thousands have stepped into critical roles: A CEO takes on the dangerous mission of driving aid into a city that's bombed every day. A Kyiv resident figures out how to keep frontline defenders fed in wartime conditions. A Polish architect crosses into the war zone to rescue stranded civilians. They're part of a new force to be reckoned with, as thousands of Ukrainians step away from their homes and jobs, to keep the country running as Russia attacks. These are their stories of navigating Life Under Siege.

https://bit.ly/3RwWEn9

SEASPIRACY

Passionate about ocean life, filmmaker Ali Tabrizi and co-creator of the award-winning Cowspiracy initially set out to celebrate the ocean. Instead, he found himself illuminating the shocking, lesser-known harm that humans inflict upon the seas and marine species, and by extension, widespread environmental destruction. From plastics and fishing gear polluting the waters, to illegal fishing and devastating hunting practices, Tabrizi's discoveries about the global fishing industry challenges notions of sustainable fishing, and will surprise those are concerned about ocean life, and the future of the planet.

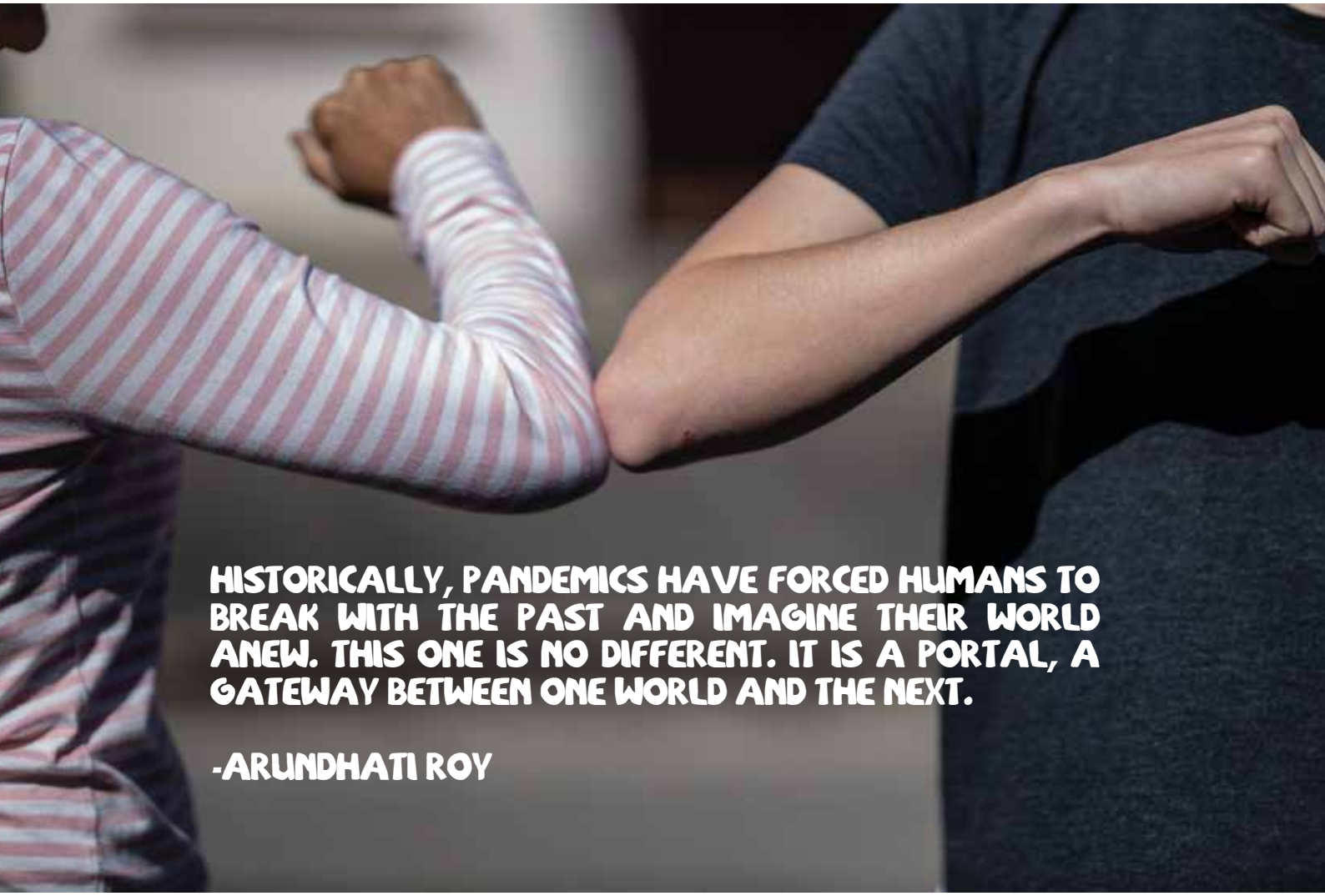
https://bit.ly/3uGVwUk

TIKTOK, BOOM

With TikTok being the world's most downloaded app, Shalini Kantayya's film addresses issues of cultural influence, algorithmic bias, cybersecurity, geopolitics and more. The film is loosely structured around three prominent TikTok personalities: Feroza Aziz, an Afghan-American teen censored by the platform for speaking out on the Uyghur genocide; Spencer X, a beatboxer who found creative and commercial success on the app; and Deja Foxx, an activist and political strategist who founded the online community GenZ Girl Gang.

https://imdb.to/3z1Boic

SEEN & HEARD


HISTORICALLY, PANDEMICS HAVE FORCED HUMANS TO BREAK WITH THE PAST AND IMAGINE THEIR WORLD ANEW. THIS ONE IS NO DIFFERENT. IT IS A PORTAL, A GATEWAY BETWEEN ONE WORLD AND THE NEXT.
-ARUNDHATI ROY

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