



**Sowing the Seeds of the
Caribbean and North America
Council for Mission (CANACOM)**

*Growing from Experiment to New Dimensions
in Mission Partnerships*



Photo by: **Hans Vegh (VPGC)**

Edited by:
Jennifer P. Martin
Education in Mission Secretary
CANACOM

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CANACOM Publications



Improving Our Serve

Sowing the Seeds of the Caribbean and North America Council for Mission (CANACOM) *Growing from Experiment to New Dimensions in Mission Partnerships* is dedicated to Rev. Earl Thames, Rev. Dr. Maitland Evans, Rev. Sam Smellie, Rev. Oswald Best, Rev. Leonard Bhagwandi, Rev. Brian Rutterford, Rt. Rev. Everson Sieunarine, Rev. John Rollins, Rev. Joseph Reed, Dr. David Young, Rev. Raymond Coke, Rev. Gus Keuther and Dr. P. Arnold C. Downers who shared the vision and were present at the birth of CANACOM.

Edited by Jennifer P. Martin

Education in Mission Secretary

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Preface

This book, *Sowing the Seeds of the Caribbean and North America Council for Mission (CANACOM): Growing from Experiment to New Dimensions in Mission Partnerships* begins with an article by the late Rev. Earl Thames. It is assumed that the article, ‘Mission in the Caribbean’, was written around 1985 as it was found among various papers pertaining to the Caribbean Association of Reformed Churches (CARC).

The paper is a good starting place because, as the then chair of CARC, Rev. Thames was seeking to reflect a view of the self-examination of that body out of which the Caribbean and North America Council for Mission (CANACOM) was born.

The eventual dissolution of CARC did not lead to the disappearance of the work which had been started. Instead, in its wake, new mission partnerships between the Caribbean and North America came on the horizon and began to take shape.

Today, in 2018, the Caribbean (as well as North America along with the wider Christian world) is forging new paths into mission partnerships. It is a blessing that CANACOM is counted among the bodies involved in the mission of God. We work willingly with the Council for World Mission (CWM) on programmes such as the ‘Legacies after Slavery’ and ‘Training in Mission’ and as is our tradition, representatives from CWM will join CANACOM ‘Young Adults in Mission’ (YAM) Work Camp in 2019.

CANACOM has the opportunity to interpret the World Council of Churches ‘Together Towards Life’ Statement on World Mission.

Ofelia Ortega's article offers good insight into this matter. As we participate on the World Council of Churches' 'Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace' and together with other Caribbean bodies, focus on statelessness in the Caribbean, God's mission remains ours.

The collection of articles in this volume considers mission at the start of the CANACOM journey, reflects on contemporary mission and casts a glance into the future. Each piece complements the others.

Expressing Gratitude

The Administrative Committee (AC) and the Finance and Administrative Support Group (FASG) of CANACOM are conscious that people lead incredibly busy lives. Bearing this in mind we are very grateful to the contributors. Without your contributions this work would not have been possible. Thanks to all who have supported our vision by dedicating time and energy to this project in various ways. Miss Nicky Lindsay at Xpress Litho has gone beyond the call of duty in her contribution to the production of this book.

We thank Rev. Dr. Hunter Farrell of the Presbyterian Church (USA) (PCUSA) and the Pittsburgh Theological Seminary for helping us to streamline and clarify the title. The strong and consistent encouragement offered by Rev. Prof. Kenneth Ross is much appreciated. Mrs. Janet McConnell, my friend and colleague in ministry in the United Church in Jamaica and the Cayman Islands (UCJCI) remains a pillar of support. Thanks.

A special posthumous word of thanks is reserved for the late Rev. Earl Thames who made a lifelong habit of reflecting his thoughts and experience in the mission field through writing. He is smiling warmly and approvingly at our efforts.

We thank all our Member Churches:

- Guyana Congregational Union (GCU)
- Guyana Presbyterian Church (GPC)
- Presbyterian Church of Guyana (PCOG)
- United Church in Jamaica and the Cayman Islands (UCJCI)
- Iglesia Presbiteriana- Reformada en Cuba (IPRC)
- Presbyterian Church (USA) (PCUSA)
- Presbyterian Church in Canada (PCC)
- United Church of Canada (UCC)
- Verenigde Protestante Gemeente van Curacao (VPGC)
- Iglesia Evangelica Dominicana (IED)
- Presbyterian Church in Trinidad and Tobago (PCTT)
- Church of Scotland in Trinidad (COST)
- Reformed Church in Suriname (RCS)

In many and varied ways they continue to partner in order to ensure that CANACOM expands its network and mission partnerships well beyond our thirty-second year. We look forward to an exciting journey together.

In closing, Miss Leslene Laing, Administrative Assistant, CANACOM has enthusiastically invested her strong and tireless support in bringing this work to fruition. Thanks. We thank Miss Kerone Lamoth very much for her assistance throughout every stage

of this work. In the midst of the activities surrounding the 350th anniversary of the Reformed Church in Suriname (RCS), I still marvel that Rev. Diana de Graven committed time to help in honing the work. Thanks. We thank Ms Farida Da Costa Gomez for ensuring that the original Rev. Hans Vegh picture of the Divi-Divi tree was obtained and transmitted to CANACOM. A special thank you is expressed to Dr. Paul Martin for his invaluable advice and editorial support.

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The tree pictured on the book cover is the Divi-Divi, commonly found in Aruba, Bonaire and Curacao. Terry Tan, a YAM 2003 participant, reminds us that its unique shape is caused by the trade winds that blow constantly from the same direction. In 2003 the CANACOM Young Adults in Mission (YAM) Work Camp adopted the tree as its symbol because it would remind the young people to be conscious of God's spirit and to be open to follow God's will.

Jennifer P. Martin

Education in Mission Secretary

CANACOM

May 2018

Contributors

The late Rev. Earl Thames was a Rhodes Scholar and Minister of the United Church in Jamaica and the Cayman Islands for 52 years. He was Chairman of the Caribbean Association of Reformed Churches (CARC) before becoming the Founding Chair of the Caribbean and North America Council for Mission (CANACOM) in 1986. For 30 years until his death in 2016, he served the organisation actively in various capacities.

Rev. Dr. Kenneth R. Ross is a Presbyterian minister at Netherlorn in Argyll, Scotland, Hon. Fellow of the Edinburgh University School of Divinity and Series Editor of the Edinburgh Companions to Global Christianity. He has earlier served as Professor of Theology at the University of Malawi and General Secretary of the Church of Scotland Board of World Mission.

Rev. Dr. Osbert James is the Moderator of the Presbyterian Church in Grenada. He has the unenviable distinction of being the only minister in that church and therefore serves simultaneously as minister of the three Presbyterian Churches in Grenada. Although busy he serves several committees in the wider community. His passion for networking and sharing ministry saw him on the CANACOM's executive on several occasions, including as Chair. He has been involved with CWM.

Mrs. Joy M. Walker-Edwards, Educator and former Executive Director of the Women's Department of the United Church in Jamaica and the Cayman Islands and missionary from the UCJCI to Southern Africa, has served the UCJCI in several capacities. She sees her Christ's Mission through wide lens and so for some years has been helping in the formation of women through (in) co-curricular activities as head of a women's hostel.

Rev. Dr. Selby R. Ross, a native of Guyana, she is a graduate of New York Theological Seminary and the International Seminary of California. All that I have gleaned from my seminary education has equipped me to serve the people of God at such a time as this. My skills for ministry have been enhanced by my experiences and learning in the classroom as well as my placements in the community. "For everyone to whom much is given, from him much will be required" (*Luke 12:48*).

Rev. Deb Rapport is Executive Director of ARISE Ministry in Toronto, Canada and is an ordained minister of The Presbyterian Church in Canada. ARISE Ministry empowers individuals involved in the sex trade to reclaim their lives.

Rev. Denyse Rattansingh-Atwarie pastors the Church of Scotland in Trinidad. She obtained her Licentiate in Theology at the St. Andrew's Theological College in Trinidad. She has served the Church of Scotland Trinidad for 17 years and has been an ordained minister for nine years.

Miss Trishtana De Cunha loves Christ, and is committed to sharing His love by helping people find peace in their lives. She is the Executive Director of Hands Down, and currently serves as the 2nd Vice President of the Guyana Congregational Union which is the youth arm of the Guyana Congregational Union.

Rev. Dr. Margaret Fowler is minister of Hope United Church in Kingston, Jamaica; Executive Director of the Theodora Project; Member of the National Task Force against Trafficking in Persons and Chair of the Protection Subcommittee.

If you wish to obtain further information on the issue of Human Trafficking, please consult with your National Church or you can contact *Rev. Dr. Fowler* at hopeunited@cwjamaica.com

Rev. Diana Haydee de Graven currently serves as Secretary on the Administration Committee of CANACOM. In 1995, she was ordained to the ministry of Word and Sacrament in the Reformed Church in Suriname. This was a historic moment because Rev. De Graven was the first black Surinamese woman to be ordained in her denomination.

Rev. Carlene Walford who hails from the parish of St. Mary in Jamaica, is a minister in the United Church in Jamaica and the Cayman Islands. She studied at the United Theological College of the West Indies (UTCWI). Rev. Walford is married with two girls.

Rev. Miguel Angel Cancu serves as the General Secretary of the Dominican Protestant Church, the oldest Protestant communion in the country. **Rev. Betania Figueroa** has served as a pastor and currently serves the Dominican Protestant Church as its chief Christian Educator with responsibility for the development of Sunday School and other Christian Education curricula and materials for the denomination.

Rev. Dr. Jo Ella Holman is a Presbyterian minister serving with sister churches and institutions in the Caribbean region on behalf of the Presbyterian Church, USA.

Rev. Dr. Ofelia Miriam Ortega is a pastor of the Presbyterian-Reformed Church in Cuba and Prof. “EMERITA” of the Evangelical Theological Seminary in Matanzas, Cuba. She served on the staff of the World Council of Churches in the Programme of Theological Education for Latin America and the Caribbean (1985-1997). She is also a former President of the World Council of Churches (2006-2013) and Director of the Christian Institute of Gender Studies (ICEG).

Mrs. Karen Francis is the Mission Secretary of CWM Caribbean. She describes her core calling as Communicator which is a role she really enjoys. As a commissioned minister in the United Church in Jamaica and the Cayman Islands, Karen served in various roles including Director of Communication, and, Personnel Development Centre Coordinator over 13 years of active service. She is married

to Norman Francis, Minister of Meadowbrook United Church. She participated in CANACOM's Young Adults in Mission (YAM) Work Camp in 1997 and 2000.

Rev. Dr. Michael N. Jagessar, Secretary for Racial Justice and Multicultural Ministry of the United Reformed Church, UK, is a writer, blogger and a theologian of the Caribbean Diaspora, transiting in the UK. His Caribbean roots make him no expert in any field of theology. His writings, which can be found on his web-page, underscore the eclectic nature of both his work and interest. He can be contacted at mnjagessar@gmail.com

Rev. Carlington Keen, J.P. is Chair of CANACOM and Minister of Hellshire United Church, United Church in Jamaica and the Cayman Islands.

Mission in the Caribbean

The Late Earl Thames

“Mission in the Caribbean” : The private sector's focus on political patronage and survival, given the complex and evolving political environment in the country, has often proved disadvantageous for group and NGOs such as ours, especially with regard to funding.

Introduction

To attempt to describe mission in the Caribbean in any depth, would mean a whole series of papers, perhaps dealing with each country in turn because of the varied nature of church planting and church development throughout the Caribbean region. This paper, therefore, does not attempt to do that. It has a much more limited purpose and focus. The aim of this paper is to examine the present state of the Christian faith in the Caribbean and try to ask the question, ‘What would Jesus Christ have us do now?’

Early Missionaries

Undoubtedly, the missionaries who brought the gospel of Jesus Christ to the Caribbean did an amazing job. I think it is true to say that no other region of the world except Europe and North America (exceptions which are fast disappearing) is so steeped in the *content* of the Christian gospel as the Caribbean. Jamaica is an exceptional example – boasting more churches per square mile than any other

country in the world, and having over 300 denominations. However, Barbados, Puerto Rico, Bonaire, and many of the smaller islands are equally saturated with the Christian message.

Multi-Religious Territories

Trinidad and Guyana have been well evangelized, but the presence of the other world religions in these countries has meant that the Christian faith has not had the 'solo run' which it has had in those territories already mentioned. Christianity has had to compete with Hinduism and the Moslem religion and so has not monopolized religious thinking in these territories. It is still, however, the main religion. In Cuba, the Christian faith did have a monopoly but this has been seriously affected by the 'nationalization' of religion by the Communist administration. In Haiti, Voodoo has been a difficult opponent to beat, and in any case, Haiti has been woefully neglected by the rest of the Caribbean. Nevertheless, despite the competition given the Christian faith in the Caribbean, it is still true that it has dominated Caribbean thinking, if for no other reason than that the former colonial masters professed this religion. A country in the Caribbean, therefore, which wants others to think that it is 'good', instinctively calls itself a Christian country.

Education

The fact that education, even in the multi-religion countries was predominantly started by the church, has also meant that the learning process went on against the background of Christian principles. Almost every person in the Caribbean, therefore, whether Hindu,

Moslem, Buddhist, Jew, Scientific Socialist or Obeah man, knows the facts of Life, Death, and Resurrection of Jesus Christ (even if these are sometimes misunderstood). The Missionaries, there, did an amazing job of gospel saturation.

Missionaries Omitted Mission

However, having imparted the Christian faith and established churches in the Caribbean, the missionaries did not move beyond this point to convince Caribbean Christians that they had a missionary task. They did not emphasize the fact that each Christian and each church needed to reach others with the gospel and the love of Christ. I mention this because both Europe and North America, having received the gospel, proceeded to reach out to others with that gospel.

Lest it be said that the restricting factor in the Caribbean was lack of material resources through colonialism and its legacy of underdevelopment and poverty, other small countries, such as Samoa in the Pacific, which were also under colonial rule, and are also relatively poor, began to reach others with the gospel at a very early date. Some African churches have been doing likewise.

The truth is that the Caribbean church has never viewed itself as a church with a mission. A few attempts such as the Jamaican mission in Nigeria and the Trinidadian mission in Panama were made in the early days but, as a general rule, the churches in the Caribbean have never entered upon their missionary task.

Church Members

Unfortunately, it goes deeper than this. The Christians in our churches have not seen themselves as missionaries even in their homelands. Very few Christians believe that they have a serious responsibility for the work of Jesus Christ. They give relatively little of their material earnings to the church, even when they are wealthy by Caribbean standards. They do not think that they have a responsibility to those around them who might be less fortunate than they are. Also, regrettably, they see little reason why they should share the gospel of Christ with another person who is not a Christian.

As a general rule, the Christian in the Caribbean feels little responsibility to share the gospel and the love of Christ with others. In fact, there is a feeling that any such sharing of the gospel and the love of Christ should come from outside, hence the attraction of the foreign evangelist. Many are still oriented towards the *foreign* missionary – the person from outside coming to them. They have not yet begun to take Christ themselves, to others, with few exceptions.

The Present Challenge

What is this saying to us? It is saying that mission in the Caribbean is not a concept which has taken deep root in most of the Christians in this area of the world. Mission in the Caribbean means to most, mission *to* the Caribbean, not mission *by* the Caribbean. This is the challenge to those of us who serve Christ as leaders in the Caribbean today – to change ‘mission to’ to ‘mission by’.

Ministerial Preparation

The challenge is a difficult one because even those who should lead in implanting this new concept of mission have not been prepared by training for this task. When the missionaries realized that they would not always be in the Caribbean, their main thought was to keep the church going. To do this, they decided to train indigenous pastors. Pastors are excellent and necessary persons in the edification of the church, but their main function is to minister to those who are already Christians – the flock. Undoubtedly, they also seek to win the children of those who are Christians; there is concern for the whole family, hence the importance of Sunday schools. However, our ministers in the Caribbean (at least those in the main line churches) are not trained to reach the unchurched. The role of the minister is to reach those in the church, and so the sermon on Sunday morning or evening is the minister's centre of his 'ministry'. If someone should come to the minister one day and suggest that it might be better to leave the 99 and go to hunt for the one lost sheep even on a Sunday evening, he would sincerely believe that that person was mad. In fact, within most of the churches there is a certain 'looking down' upon those who feel led to follow Christ in this and hold evangelistic services in the open air.

We have forgotten that Jesus Christ our Lord said that this was His mission. We have also forgotten where Jesus preached most of His Sermons and where the church itself was born. These events took place, not in a building, but in the open air! Even if we do not wish to go as far as the open air, Jesus said that he did not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance. Because this was his

mission, He went where the sinners were, and ate and drank with them. I think that it can be said that there is little reaching out to the 'the world' by the churches of the Caribbean.

Some may point to the social outreach project here and there or an evangelistic campaign now and again, but there is no concerted and continuous effort towards reaching those outside the church. Part of the reason for this is that ministerial preparation in the Caribbean does not include any specific training in evangelism and mission. For instance, there is no such course at U.T.C.W.I., the largest interdenominational Theological College in the West Indies.

Missiology

Missiology is not offered by any of the other places of study used by the main line churches. There is, therefore, need for education in mission at both the ministerial and lay levels of most of the Caribbean churches. (Knowledge of the situation in Netherlands Antilles and Cuba is inadequate.)

Younger Churches

It is significant that the younger churches (called the 'sects'), despite their weaknesses in other areas of theological training, are very strong in this. They are in no doubt that the majority of the people in the Caribbean still need to be reached for Christ, and they leave few stones unturned in their efforts to reach those outside the church. Need I add that many of these churches are growing rapidly while many of the main line churches are declining slowly or are, at best, static.

Stewardship

Strangely, this failure to realize the importance of mission has affected stewardship. Most Christians give to the church merely to be warmed in heart on a Sunday morning, and to have a good church funeral at death! Others give to anything that will enhance their own church-building projects, organs and so on.

Few can see what the church would be doing with a lot of money. After all, the church is not ‘doing’ anything. Their giving to the church as well as the offering of their talents to the church is minimal. They do not see that the church has a task to perform – preaching the Gospel to every creature in both word and deed. Lip service may be given at annual missionary services, but nothing more. Mission is not a vital part of church life. Very few would agree with William Temple’s statement that the church is the only society which exists for the benefit of its non-members. Fewer still would accept Emil Brunner’s statement that the church exists as a fire exists by burning. This means that their concept of the church and their willingness to support the church, have been greatly reduced. It is church life as a whole which has suffered as a result of the failure to emphasize mission *by* the Caribbean.

What is needed now?

In simple terms – an outward look. Jesus said to his disciples, “Look on the field.” That is the correct Christian stance, not “Look on the church.” The field on which we should concentrate our vision begins in our own communities and countries. Many are still to be reached for Christ by proclamation and love.

We need to remember that, every time we hear a new-born baby cry, there is another soul yet to believe. However, the fields do not end there. Trinidad, for example, is next door to one of the largest mission fields in the world – South America. Guyana is in a troubled and needy field, and there is Central America. Jamaica and some of the smaller islands are right beside Haiti, the most neglected country in the Western Hemisphere.

When we look at the field, one thing faces us – need. We do not have to ask, ‘What is the mission in the Caribbean?’ The only real question is, ‘How do we carry it out?’ Although the answer to this question will occupy many months and years of prayer, thought and action, it can nevertheless be said that we in the Caribbean must carry out our mission just as Europe, North America, Samoa, and the first disciples, carried out theirs – in faith, in dependence on Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit. Christ has promised to provide the spiritual resources and the people needed for the mission.

We in the Caribbean have received much. Is there any responsibility laid upon us?

[Paper found among the Caribbean Association of Reformed Churches (CARC) 1985 documents]

From Spider to Starfish – Partnership in Mission in the 21st Century

Kenneth R. Ross

Introduction

From Partnership to Twinning

It was the Whitby meeting of the International Missionary Council, held in 1947, which powerfully gave currency to the concept of ‘partnership’ as a way in which churches could engage together in the missionary task.¹

It was an innovative and inspiring idea to a generation of missionaries who had begun their life’s work with the assumption that it would fall to them and their compatriots to provide leadership to the ‘daughter churches’ which were emerging as a result of the work of the missionary movement. Their closeness to the emerging indigenous leadership ensured that it was, not always but often, highly rewarding for the expatriate missionaries to move to ancillary and supportive roles while able local Christians took up the leadership positions. For the latter it was no less inspiring. Having often grown up in a colonial context and, in many cases, having been involved in the struggle for political independence, it was a momentous and historic step for them to accept responsibility to lead their churches.

In most cases the former missionary leadership and the new indigenous leadership continued to work together in close

association for a generation or so. It was a revelation that they could be associated not on a basis of superior and inferior, parent and child, but on a basis of equality and mutuality. Hence the representatives of older and younger churches who gathered at Whitby coined the phrase “partnership in obedience” to indicate this new understanding of the relationship in which they stood.² The second half of the 20th century saw a one-way understanding of mission give way to one where “mutual relationships were seen to originate in obedience to the living Word of God in Jesus Christ.”³

With the passing of the years, however, partnership began to pose problems. In some cases, the partner relationship seemed to have diminishing content. The long-serving missionaries who had built up an intimate knowledge of the local language and culture were replaced, if at all, by mission partners who served for shorter terms on a philosophy of ‘working themselves out of a job.’

Opportunities to build up mutual confidence were limited and the relationship between the two churches gradually became more a matter of cherished history than of living reality. In other cases, the relationship continued to exist but was bedevilled by vast and growing disparity in the resources available on either side of the partnership. It was difficult to develop any common programme without lapsing into dependency on the one side and a patronising approach on the other. Many a partnership consultation found itself returning to the question of “the meaning of the partnership” and participants struggled to offer a convincing answer. At the same time, a motion to give up on the partnership would be sure to be

defeated. Those involved cherished a sense of common belonging even when uncertain of what it really meant or where it was leading.

Towards the end of the twentieth century new dynamics began to emerge in the quest for authentic partnership and these have continued to strengthen in the early years of the 21st century. The year 1986 when the Caribbean and North America Council for Mission (CANACOM) was formed, has been identified by Phil Butler as the year of the birth of the modern ministry partnership movement. There was much excitement around the concept and the practice of the Caribbean and North America embarking upon a mission adventure of mutuality through a network of churches.

New networks in other parts of the world, such as the Community for Evangelistic and Apostolic Action (CEVAA), which grew out of the Paris Missionary Society, and the Council for World Mission (CWM), which grew out of the work of the London Missionary Society, had embarked in the 1970s on a similar adventure. Soon the “ecumenical sharing of resources” was established as a watchword of church and mission.⁴ This is nowhere better illustrated than in the many ways in which CANACOM and CWM have worked together and shared resources across more than thirty years.

The new spirit of mutuality and sharing found expression, however, not only at the level of national churches, missionary societies and international networks. Even more strikingly, new possibilities began to open up at a more local level.

The communications revolution has made it possible, as never before, for local congregations to link directly with their

counterparts overseas. At the same time, a decentralized way of working has quickly gained ground in commerce and culture. In the imagery of Ori Brafman and Rod Beckstrom, it is a change from the spider to the starfish. A spider is organised from the centre – there is a brain that tells the legs what to do. Not so with a starfish. It is a network of cells each with its own autonomy and it functions in a completely decentralized way.⁵

This is the direction being taken by business. Where a corporation with a strong HQ would put goods on the market, E-bay now allows buyers and sellers to interact in a totally decentralized way. Where music was produced by a few large companies and put on the market for sale, now music can be exchanged on the Internet through completely decentralized networks. Mission is not immune to this great change. Where mission enthusiasts started a mission society and developed a strong headquarters (HQ) to run it, now they are more likely to take action themselves and to participate in mission through a decentralized network.

In church terms this has led to a move away from an HQ-led approach to mission towards more of a local-to-local approach. There has been an upsurge of links being forged either between local congregations or between regional church bodies. In the Church of Scotland, for example, the *Church Without Walls* Report, something of a charter document as the church entered the twenty-first century, called on congregations to “research an area of the world church and establish a personal partnership with a congregation or project.”⁶ In shorthand, these kinds of relationships have become known as ‘twinings’. Rather than depending on a specialist missionary,

congregations are taking ownership of particular relationships and developing them through direct involvement. To some extent this is making virtue out of necessity.

The lifelong missionaries around whom congregations built their global horizons in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries were fast disappearing. If congregations were to continue having an active overseas connection they had to find a new model through which to work. Twinning was an idea whose time had come.⁷

New Eyes to Read the New Testament

As has happened often before in church history, new circumstances, new questions and new approaches to mission have stimulated a new reading of the Bible. Becoming alert to the possibility and the importance of local congregations relating to one another across wide distances proves to be a hermeneutical key to unlock a neglected but significant biblical theme. Biblical passages which have been accorded little attention in earlier times now have striking resonance for people engaged in this new mode of partnership in mission.

Paul's letter to the Romans, for example, has been the basis for many sermons that have drawn on its profound doctrinal statements. But how often has attention been paid to the final chapter, devoted to the greetings that Paul extends to no less than 26 individuals? All were people whom the apostle had met at different points in his many journeys and all were now based in Rome. The links, the friendships, the relationships which bound Paul to these people were a big part of his Christian life and experience. As he looked forward

to visiting Rome he expressed what the visit would mean to him: “I know that when I come to you, I will come in the full measure of the blessing of Christ.”⁸ Far from inconsequential add-on, this relatedness, this giving and receiving of hospitality seems to be somewhere close to the core of what it was to profess faith in Jesus Christ.

The book of Romans witnesses not only to core beliefs but also to a way of life – marked by radical openness, wide connections, and loving relationships across boundaries of distance, language and culture. The congregations found in the New Testament did not operate in isolation. They put much effort into sustaining relationships with one another, even when they were far apart geographically. Paul, in his letter to the Philippians, thanked God for his “partnership” with the church in Philippi.⁹

This kind of relatedness, uniting people through faith across wide distances and vastly different contexts, is being rediscovered on a large scale. The possibilities to discover and express the special qualities of church-to-church relationship have expanded out of all recognition. Relating to the church in distant parts of the world and in very different cultures was once the province of the dedicated few. Now it is something in which we all may have a part. Rather than this being an inconsequential add-on, growing numbers are discovering that this is a core element of what it means to be a Christian.

The Struggle for Equality and Mutuality

For fifty years the missionary movement has been engaged in the struggle to achieve an equal partnership in the gospel between churches based in the West and their counterparts based in the South. Yet, on the face of it, it would be difficult to argue that the move to adopt twinning as a primary means of interaction has been equally driven from both sides of the partnership. To a great extent it has been an initiative of the Western partner to which the partner in the South has felt obliged to respond. It has often come in a context where the Western partner has, however reluctantly, been cutting back on appointments and grants so that the move to twinning is the only remaining means of continuing a cherished relationship. By and large, there has been no active choice on the part of the Southern partner. In fact, in some cases it may have come as an unwelcome imposition. Traditions of hospitality mean that great effort is put into the reception of visitors, using time, energy and resources that are urgently needed for other work.

The new arrangements also give expression to the inequality by which the relationship is marked. The twinning visit is relatively straightforward for the wealthy Westerner but much less so for the Southern counterpart. As John Hull has pertinently observed:

The iron curtain has passed away and even the bamboo curtain hardly exists, but the place has been taken by the money curtain. We in the two-seventh rich world are surrounded by a money curtain which is like a one-way mirror. It is invisible to those of us on the inside because we can see right through it, but to the poor majority outside the money curtain it stands as a

glittering barrier through which they cannot pass. We can go to them but they cannot come to us. Globalisation has conquered every area of human life except people.

This harsh reality is borne out in the visa application process, which makes it abundantly clear that it is much easier to move in one direction than in the other. Ease and adventure for the Westerner contrast with anxiety and frustration for the Southern partner. This imbalance is compounded by unequal access to communication technology. While the Westerner might well have easy Internet access at home, receiving and sending emails might be an uncertain and expensive logistical exercise for the Southern partner.

It should be observed, however, that contact between those on either side of the “money curtain” may prove to be a significant lever to achieve change. Direct experience of the disparity of resources available to Western and Southern partners brings home more powerfully than any number of statistics the need for greater justice in the world economic order. In particular, Westerners who have been exposed to the harsh realities of poverty in the South are often the people who take the lead in campaigns for economic justice. By aligning themselves, through partnership, with the most excluded and most disadvantaged sections of the global community, sharing their life and speaking with them and for them, Western partners are motivated to become part of the solution and not just part of the problem in a divided world. It may be that it is active church partnership, sustained over generations and given renewed expression today, which can break through the invisible curtain between the ‘parallel worlds’.

It is also empowering at a deeper, more relational level. At the Edinburgh 1910 World Missionary Conference the great Indian bishop, V. S. Azariah, gave expression to a profound aspiration of churches of the Global South in relation to their missionary founders: “Through all the ages to come the Indian church will rise up in gratitude to attest the heroism and self-denying labours of the missionary body. You have given your goods to feed the poor. You have given your bodies to be burned. We also ask for *love*. Give us FRIENDS.” The moratorium of the 1960s expressed the same desire – not for a breaking of the relationship but for a more equal and closer partnership.

Might twinning prove to be the answer to the prayers of a century? Certainly, it is providing the opportunity for churches to relate to one another beyond the institutional and national leadership level by mobilising the grassroots of the churches to engage with one another. Bishop Azariah, we have heard you – we offer you love, we give you friends.

The Place of Twinning in the Transformative Purpose of God

Should the ‘missionary experience’ metamorphose from something enjoyed by small numbers of people over long periods of time to something enjoyed by large numbers of people over short periods of time, there are sure to be ‘pros and cons’. The strengths of classical missionary service – deep knowledge of language and culture and cumulative growth in effectiveness – will not be replicated in a short-term experience. On the other hand, the

potential effect of a short-term trip should not be underestimated. As Robert Priest and others have argued:

Like pilgrimages, these trips are rituals of intensification, where one temporarily leaves the ordinary, compulsory, workaday life “at home” and experiences an extraordinary, voluntary, sacred experience “away from home” in a liminal space where sacred goals are pursued, physical and spiritual tests are faced, normal structures are dissolved, communitas is experienced, and personal transformation occurs. This transformation ideally produces new selves to be reintegrated back into everyday life “at home,” new selves which in turn help to spiritually rejuvenate the churches they come from, and inspire new mission vision at home.¹⁰

Moreover, the transformative short-term experience may well prove to be the seed-bed from which longer-term participation in the mission of Christ will grow. It need not be a case of *either* short-term *or* long-term but could be a case of the one leading to the other. It may be that the need is for a ‘mixed economy’ where a larger number of short-term participants generate a smaller number of longer-term agents in the missionary enterprise.

The twinning model calls for a decisive move away from the inherited model of understanding the ‘mission field’. The thinking of many is still governed by a 19th century linear model of mission, where it is all about the transmission of something *from* here *to* there. Willem Saayman has pointed out that in “such an understanding the ‘sending’ church acts only as starting point and provider of personnel and resources. The ‘sending’ church *in its*

essential nature, though, can be left totally untouched by the process...” By contrast Saayman proposes that: “the process and progress from church to mission to church should rather be seen as cyclical, and specifically as an ascending, never-ending spiral. From the very beginning, therefore, the progress is not in a straight line away from the ‘sending’ church to some far-away unreached ‘mission field’, but rather curving back to it throughout.”¹¹

Anyone participating in a twinning must do so with openness to their own transformation. It is a profound spiritual experience that lies in store. No one should imagine that it will be an easy thing to do. No one should imagine that it will leave them in their ‘comfort zone’. They need to be ready to have their priorities and lifestyle challenged in ways they never expected. Their faith will be stretched as they learn to understand the gospel from a different perspective. It is, in fact, a great adventure in discipleship. Reflecting on the words of Paul to the Galatians when he thinks of his role in terms of the pains of childbirth, John Taylor once said that “partnership between Churches in mission means an apostolic concern from one to the other to help one another to present the likeness of Christ more clearly; being in travail for one another until we all are formed in the shape of Christ.”¹²

It is that spiritual ambition which is the driving force of a successful twinning relationship. As with any relationship, to enter a twinning you have to be willing to open yourself up to the other, you have to be prepared to be changed and influenced by the relationship, you need to be ready to embark on an experience of challenge and growth.

Coming Home: The Presbyterian Church in Grenada, CANACOM and Rev. Dr. Osbert James

Osbert James

Introduction

Rev. William Haig was the first minister to be inducted to the Presbyterian Church in Grenada (PCG). He was inducted in 1833 and served until 1839. My fore-parents, at the time of this induction and before the emancipation of slavery in the English-speaking Caribbean, would not have known that their progeny would eventually have joined a long line of ministers to serve in the ministry and mission of the Presbyterian Church in Grenada.

My journey to the Presbyterian Church was a very circuitous one. Born into a family of devout Catholics, in my early youth I experienced a period of questioning which led me to become a member of the St. George's Baptist Church (Southern Baptist). This then spurred my training as a minister at the Southern Baptist Mission College in Barbados (no longer in operation). In pursuit of higher qualifications, I studied in the United States of America at three different times and returned home immediately after each educational sojourn.

In 1987-1992 on a seven-year scholarship from the Liberty Baptist Association in North Carolina, I did my Bachelor's degree in

Communication Studies at Wingate University, Wingate, North Carolina and my MDiv at the Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, Wake Forest, North Carolina. I completed the programme two years ahead of schedule and immediately returned to Grenada.

On returning to Grenada in 1992, I continued working with the Grenada Baptist association and in 1993, I was recalled to my home church and my first pastorate. I resigned in 1997 and for a time volunteered at the General hospital where I ministered to terminally ill patients. My substantive job at this time was executive assistant and then acting director of the Grenada Save the Children Development Agency (Grensave).

From 1999-2001 I was a Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) student at the Healthcare Chaplaincy in New York City where I spent eight months at the Brookdale University Hospital and did an additional year of residency at the New York Presbyterian Hospital and on completion of the course I returned to Grenada.

On returning to Grenada in October 2001 (and still a Baptist), I attended a worship service at the St. Andrew Presbyterian Church (The Kirk) in St. George's. Unknown to me, God had directed my steps to that church. My friend Christine Brathwaite who had invited me to church a few years before, was pleased that I had finally responded to her invitation. She introduced me to the Rev. John Bushby, a missionary from the United Church of Canada, who was the then Minister at the church. When he heard that I was seminary trained, his immediate response was "I can leave now." On Palm Sunday 2002, I was received as a member of the Kirk, and on May 26, 2002, I was installed as the minister and Moderator of the

Presbyterian Church – all this, less than a year after I had first set foot in the church.

In the Summer of 2004, I had an indelibly uncanny experience. I had gone to West Africa to attend the Council Meeting of the World Communion of Reformed Churches in Accra, Ghana.

As I left the airport for my journey to the campus of the University of Ghana, Accra, the feeling that I had finally arrived home, suddenly overtook me.

Arriving Home Theologically

The feeling that I have arrived home theologically, is one that I have been experiencing since I became a Presbyterian.

From the moment I accepted the call to serve the church, CANACOM began the process of initiating me into the Reformed Tradition. The decision to hold the CANACOM Council Meeting (then held annually) in Grenada in November of 2002 was one of the first events to take place.

The then EIM Secretary, Rev. Verna Cassells, arranged for me to visit Jamaica to learn about the organization of the United Church in Jamaica and the Cayman Islands. I attended a retreat of ministers of the church and visited institutions and projects of the United Church.

The CANACOM Council meetings were especially important in my orientation to the Reformed world as I was blessed with the opportunity to meet Reformed Christians from all the CANACOM member churches. Through my interaction with my reformed brothers and sisters, I garnered firsthand knowledge and information

about the tradition of which I was now a part. At the council meetings, I particularly looked forward to attending services in member churches. Coming from the Grenada/Southern Baptist tradition I wanted to be immersed in reformed forms of worship.

During the years of my involvement in CANACOM, I attended council meetings in Canada, Cuba, Curacao, the Dominican Republic, Guyana, Jamaica, and Trinidad and Tobago. In my capacity as deputy chair of CANACOM, I chaired the Personnel Committee and was part of the team that interviewed and recommended Rev. Nicole Ashwood to serve as EIM Secretary when Rev. Verna Cassells completed her service with CANACOM.

I have had the opportunity to serve as Deputy Chair of CANACOM for a number of years and also as CANACOM Chair. In 2012 the CANACOM meeting was once again held in Grenada. I relinquished my chairmanship and took a hiatus from active involvement in the leadership of CANACOM as I wanted to spend as little time as possible away from my young daughter. My support behind the scenes, however, has not abated.

In 2010, I commenced studies in pursuit of a Doctor in Ministries degree at the Pittsburgh Theological Seminary, an institution of the Presbyterian Church, USA. A major reason for doing the degree was to experience academic study in a Reformed setting and to be considered a bona fide Reformed minister, having received education in a reformed institution.

In many ways, CANACOM and I have grown together. CANACOM's involvement in Grenada existed long before my advent, however. It was CANACOM that arranged for Rev. and

Mrs. Ashley Smith to serve in Grenada for a year. A very experienced minister and former head of the United Theological College, Jamaica, he served in the capacity as a full-time minister and Moderator of the church. Mrs. Smith, a retired Bursar, was her husband's partner in ministry.

In 2004, through CANACOM, and because of the efforts of the late Rev. Fitz Laing, a stalwart of the organization, CANACOM endorsed the visit of a mission team from the United Church in Jamaica and the Cayman Islands to come to Grenada. The young adults were very well received, and their presence showed the kind of solidarity that we have come to expect from CANACOM member churches. The team worked and witnessed among us with great distinction.

In 2006, CANACOM showed its confidence in Grenada's resilience when, two years after hurricane Ivan and one year after Hurricane Emily, the YAM work camp was held in Grenada. The work camp brought together young adults from all of CANACOM's member churches as well as young people from the Council for World Mission (CWM) including New Zealand, Madagascar, Hong Kong and Wales. There was also an Anglican young man from a non-CANACOM Caribbean country, St. Kitts, in attendance, demonstrating our ecumenical commitment.

CANACOM encouraged churches to work together bilaterally. So, I attended and spoke at the national youth rally of the Presbyterian Church in Trinidad and Tobago (PCTT), when Joel John was president of the PCTT Board of Youth Affairs (BOYA). The PCTT BOYA came to Grenada and held a youth rally and

helped us start our BOYA. Additionally, the PCTT invited and paid for three youths from the PCG to attend their Summer camp.

In 2011, a young Dominican lawyer, Jhanderys Dotel was part of a Joint Mission Action Team (JOMAT) to Grenada. I want to believe her experience in Grenada contributed immensely to her going on to seminary to study Social Work.

Prior to 2009 when Rev. Jim Young came to minister among us as pastor of the Belair Congregation and Chaplain at the MacDonald College, the only North American Church that had been sending us ministers was the United Church in Canada. The Presbyterian Church in Canada (PCC) began partnering with the Presbyterian Church of Grenada when Rev. Dr. Ron Wallace, then a delegate of the PCC to CANACOM's Council meeting heard about a need for ministerial help in Grenada. The need for help in Grenada was highlighted by a report done by Rev. Ashley Smith who in 2005, at the behest of CANACOM, led a fact-finding trip to Grenada after hurricanes Ivan and Emily. Rev. Young served until 2011.

After the departure of Rev. Jim Young, the PCG requested CANACOM's support once more. Rev. Nicole Ashwood, the then EIM Secretary, came and worked with and among us for two months. The following were her terms of reference:

To work with the Belair Congregation to set them on a path to fruitful Christ-centred ministry.

To evaluate the effectiveness and perception of the last Chaplaincy programme at the MacDonald College and to make recommendations for meeting the psycho-spiritual needs of students, teachers and staff going forward.

The scope and work were extended well beyond these points. When Rev. Ashwood left, her evaluations of the Church situation and her recommendations helped in the smooth transitioning when I again took responsibility for the congregation.

The Presbyterian Church in Grenada was built on the basis of a very firm type of faith as ministers who heeded the call to serve gave of themselves selflessly to honour the Lord. Many sterling examples can be seen in the lives these missionaries and their families led. One must consider that our very rich history is as a result of the earnest need to hear from and to trust God by yielding in obedience to His will.

CANACOM and the Presbyterian Church in Grenada have worked together on many occasions and CANACOM has facilitated our doing ministry in our context, be it through direct assistance or grant funding. One such project is the Good Samaritan Project which transformed a workshop /garage into a halfway house/room for persons coming from the sister Island of Carriacou to the mainland or from the outer parishes to visit family or relatives in the hospital. As the church is situated five minutes walking distance from the main Hospital in Grenada, persons who need to overnight or spend a few days to visit and care for their sick relatives are allowed to stay at the Good Samaritan Project free of cost.

On another occasion, CANACOM partly funded the PCG's attempt to help one person who expressed an interest in ministry to clarify and discern her call. The help was in the form of a grant which was used to pay her a stipend for about six to eight months

while she worked alongside the minister to help her decipher her call.

The Seed Continues to Grow

The partnership between CANACOM and the Presbyterian Church in Grenada is a prime example of the development of a seed which was planted during the early experimental stages of CANACOM. That seed continues to grow as new dimensions of mission partnership emerge.

It has been fifteen years since my relationship with CANACOM and the Reformed tradition began. However, it feels as if I have always been Presbyterian. Now, as I consider some of my theological positions from the time I was a Baptist minister, I find that they were akin to many reformed positions. Indeed, my journey from Roman Catholicism to Baptist and now Presbyterian, has led me home to the Reformed fold. I am and shall always be grateful for CANACOM's accompaniment.

The United Church in Jamaica and the Cayman Islands (UCJCI) in Collaboration with CANACOM

Mission Trip to Haiti – June 7-14, 2008

Joy M. Walker-Edwards

Introduction

The UCJCI is a church that has a strong focus on mission; however, for many years this focus was rooted in receiving missionaries and mission teams from various regions of the world. As the church developed and opened itself to the guidance of the Holy Spirit, we have been challenged and inspired to become more actively involved in mission by sending people to serve as missionaries and participate in short-term mission programmes nationally, regionally and globally.

For over three decades, the UCJCI has had an active missionary in Haiti – Nurse Joan Page-Bain, who has dedicated her entire life to serve the people in Haiti by providing health care to those who are deprived and require medical care. She has been located in Guichard, Les Cayes on the south west coast of Haiti.

Over these many years, the church has provided moderate support to this ministry but has always desired to give more tangible support. This was evident at the 2007 Synod where an impassioned plea was made for the UCJCI to plan and deploy a mission team to Haiti to provide tangible support to the mission there and also to be

in solidarity with Joan for her unstinting service to the people. The Mission, Witness and Service Committee was tasked to undertake this mission.

This was no easy task to accomplish because several attempts were made previously by the church to send a mission team to Haiti; however, there were prevailing circumstances that militated against the implementation of the trip. There were challenges such as man-made and natural disasters, unrest and violence, uncertainty about participants' safety as well as the level of financial support from the church to cover costs.

Having placed those challenges on the periphery, the mission sub-committee under the chairmanship of Rev. Mark Stewart and Mrs. Joy Walker Edwards, Executive Director began the planning process. Immediately Ms. Claire Trueman, who had a passion for the mission in Haiti joined the team. We were resolute that "no stone should be left unturned; all should be done with God's help to undertake this mission.

As the planning intensified, the major hurdle of funding the project faced us; the UCJCI told us from the onset that the project had the church's blessings but regrettably, the funding available to finance the mission trip would be minimal. We were disappointed and some persons were annoyed and felt we should abort the plan because it was proving difficult to locate adequate financial support. After much prayer and consultation with stakeholders, we were encouraged to proceed in faith believing that Jehovah Jireh, our Provider would come to our rescue and according to Phillipians 4:19, supply all our need according to His riches in glory. Yes, God

did come to our rescue by sending Rev. Nicole Ashwood, Education in Mission Secretary of CANACOM to one of the planning meetings, where she heard our cry and responded that CANACOM had an interest in partnering with the church as the project was fulfilling one of its mission mandates. By the next meeting, she reported that CANACOM would contribute USD\$5000.00 to the pool. Our spirits were renewed and we thanked God for his mercies towards us and we became resolute that under God we would raise all the funds required to undertake this mission trip.

The planning intensified, and there was miracle after miracle as interested persons began to join the team and together we felt that the mission should be focused in three (3) main areas:

(1) Health Care – Medical and dental care were to be provided, medication to be dispensed and basic health care supplies to be distributed.

(2) Construction – There was a commitment to complete the construction of a school building that was on the premises of the church in the community.

(3) Christian Nurture and Personal Development - Vacation Bible School (VBS) was to be conducted in the afternoons. In the evenings special activities for youth would be held. Importantly gender engagements would be organized for personal empowerment and cultural exchanges.

Healthcare

The promotion of the trip went into high gear, medical personnel were enlisted and members of the clergy as well as laity (including young people) were prominent. The doctors and nurses sourced medical supplies and pharmaceuticals. Persons with construction skills sourced equipment and tools and others sourced school supplies and resources for VBS.

Being in constant dialogue with Nurse Joan Page-Bain, Mrs. Walker Edwards, the coordinator, indicated areas of need and this was communicated to the planning team. Nurse Page-Bain indicated the need for toiletries and cleaning supplies; individuals and groups such as the Women's Fellowship gathered and donated these items.

As the time drew closer, interested persons were asked to join the planning team and church groups who had visited Haiti on mission trips were invited to monthly meetings to share their experiences. Haitians living in Jamaica conducted orientation sessions and sensitized the group on cultural practices, what should be expected and how to behave in Haiti. They also provided basic language training.

Throughout the planning process, the major issue we faced was the sourcing of adequate funds. Participants were engaged in private fundraising activities. Participants from the South Middlesex Area Council (Southern Regional Mission Council) hosted a concert at the Davyton United Church, congregations and auxiliaries made contributions, UCJCI made a contribution. However all the sums combined still could not cover the total expenses. Consequently,

each participant had to raise and contribute a significant amount of money.

Pharmaceutical companies donated pharmaceutical and dental supplies whereas groups and individuals donated clothing, toiletries, toys and household items.

The coordinating role included the following:

- ❖ Communicating with Nurse Page-Bain constantly to ensure that there was agreement on all aspects of the programme and to keep the plans on target. Challenges arose sometimes because of the telephone service.
- ❖ Wiring funds to Nurse Page-Bain on time for preparation of venue, meals, etc., and this was done through Ministries in Action in Miami. Thanks to the late Rev. H. E. Thames who established the contact.
- ❖ Exploring travel arrangements with a number of airlines. It was difficult to get a direct flight to Haiti and the cost was prohibitive. Additionally, there was a large volume of items to be transported. After many failed attempts and anxious moments, God provided an aircraft and a pilot which took us safely to and from Haiti. Thanks to Jehovah – Rohi – our Protector.
- ❖ Confirming in advance the participants who would make the trip. Some persons were initially keen to participate but eventually were unable to make the trip.
- ❖ Collecting participants' passports, getting them processed by the Haitian Embassy for visas and returning them to participants on time.

- ❖ Collecting funds from participants/groups to purchase air-tickets and forward to participants in time for departure.
- ❖ Ensuring that programme areas were coordinated and resources were in place.
- ❖ Ensuring that formal commissioning of all participants in local congregations was conducted on the Sunday before departure.

Sixteen (16) participants embarked on this journey:

Rev. Mark Stewart – Chair, Mission Sub-committee/Davyton; Mrs. Joy Walker Edwards – Executive Director Mission Services/Women’s Fellowship; Ms. Claire Trueman and Mrs. Marcia Powell – Andrews Memorial; Rev. H. E. Thames – Andrews Memorial/Ebenezer (now deceased); Rev. Nicole Ashwood – Education in Mission Secretary (CANACOM); Rev. Lennox Scarlet – Knox Schools; Mr. Bonito Ellis and Mr. Chistopher Lampart – James Hill; nurses Doreen Fearon – Andrews, Ocho Rios and Delphina Mendez – Lowe River; Mr. Winston Henry – Davyton; doctors Ransford Fearon – Andrews, Ocho Rios and Edmund Reid – Boulevard; and Ms. Peta-Gaye Chambers – Meadowbrook.

The historic mission was a resounding success – We give God all the Glory. The participants’ commitment to mission was challenged and strengthened; the beneficiaries were grateful for our intervention, Joan’s ministry to the people was reinforced and she was re-energized and inspired to continue in God’s ministry. The mission trip allowed UCJCI to reconfirm its ongoing commitment to supporting mission and missionaries. CANACOM was commended

for sharing resources to enable people to participate in mission and this should be replicated.

At the time of the 2008 trip it was felt that all effort should be made to mobilize God's people to participate in another trip to Haiti as a matter of urgency in order to accompany Missionary Joan Page-Bain in the mission to which God has called her. Since then some churches have accompanied Nurse Joan Page-Bain in concrete ways.

Contribution of Joy M. Walker Edwards

Reflections:

Rev. Lennox Scarlett

For many years Nurse Joan Page-Bain had served as missionary to Haiti and had received support from the United Church in Jamaica and the Cayman Islands. There had, however, never been a visit by a group representing the United Church in Jamaica and the Cayman Islands. We were very pleased to be able to embody this level of support for her work. We set about this project fully aware of the significance of the visit in the mission and ministry of our church.

Many of us in the team were somewhat aware of the difficult circumstances under which Haitians live. The Haitian condition was a result of a combination of political unrest, malnourishment and violence, especially in the overpopulated capital, Port-au-Prince, where many people in slums lived in the absence of infrastructure.

Briefing

- In order to prepare us to successfully work in partnership with our Haitian colleagues, attention was paid to providing us with relevant information to ensure that we would be able to live and operate respectfully in our new environment. It was brought to our attention that, although our time there would be very short, our participation would be important. Among the challenges highlighted were:
- The majority of the Haitian population live under the poverty line and just over half are categorized as living in abject poverty
- Two-thirds of all of the people depend on the agricultural sector for their livelihoods, mainly small-scale subsistence farming, and are vulnerable to damage from frequent natural disasters. This damage had been exacerbated by widespread deforestation across the country.
- We were emotionally, physically and spiritually prepared for the week-long trip.

Mission Goal

The mission goal was to help in building a school, distributing tracts towards evangelism, share in worship services, and critically, to offer support to Joan regarding medical supplies for the clinic.

Work Plan

This involved:

- the distribution of tracts and the interaction with persons in the villages
- helping with the construction work at the school
- working with Nurse Joan Page-Bain in the clinic

Teams were rotated to give everyone an opportunity to participate in all the activities. It became clear as we interacted with the people on the streets that a large percentage of people had limited access to sanitation, which included clean water. Our sensitization programme proved helpful as we came face to face with some of the more difficult aspects of Haitian reality. While Creole was the dialect spoken, it wasn't always easy to understand but gestures oftentimes sufficed. Thankfully, Ms. Lesline Davis, daughter of Rev. James Davis from the Mt. Olivet, was fluent in French. Her significant linguistic skills helped to enhance the group's confidence.

A memorable moment for me was preaching at the worship service and having the message translated from English to French (and sometimes Creole) as I spoke. Jean Eneck Desir, the host pastor made the worship come alive with the translations. Jean and I have kept in touch and remain friends since then.

Nurse Joan showed us around town, from Port-au-Prince to other neighbouring towns, which heightened our cultural exposure. The market places needed overall improvement. There were more sellers than buyers, the "tap tap" buses were commonplace, the hillside denuded, and extreme poverty was obvious. Despite these limitations, I marvelled as I saw street vendors and markets come

alive. This suggested to me that there was an obviously deeply embedded positive, entrepreneurial spirit in the Haitian culture. Hope abounds in situations which could easily cause despair. It was within circumstances such as those that I felt the presence of God most profoundly. The experience has challenged me deeply to be a more faithful witness for Christ.

It is clear that Nurse Joan and family will need continued and sustained support to carry on the tremendous work of ministry. However, this is a calling that, despite the extent of pain and loss that surrounds her, Joan has maintained her strong and resolute faith in the confidence that God is her source of strength.

Ms. Claire Truman

10 Miracles

1. Our first hurdle was to identify a plane to take us. There were no direct flights from Kingston to Port-au-Prince that would offset the need for visas and additional funds for travel via Miami, Panama or Cuba. The first miracle was finding a pilot willing to arrange a charter flight for us.

2. The second miracle was finding all the personnel we needed (two doctors, two nurses, one dentist, four ministers/evangelists, teachers, missionaries, three builders [masons]) – in all eight men and eight women of varying ages and abilities who worked well together. We ministered to 200 patients in the clinic, made dental inspections, built the walls for new classrooms for the school belonging to the church, ran a VBS for up to 120 children, held meetings for men and

women as well as an evangelistic service, a youth event and a cultural night – all in the space of five days! This was greatly facilitated by our interpreters.

3. The third miracle – which was a little slow in coming – was funding. Some of the team had great difficulty in finding the wherewithal but with donations and fundraising this materialized.

4. The fourth miracle was provision of medical supplies in abundance.

5. The fifth was provision of clothing and gifts for the children and this was oversubscribed.

6. The sixth miracle was great! Our plane was late leaving Kingston and so when we arrived in Port-au-Prince we were the only passengers. Two pieces of luggage went astray and in trying to locate these none of our luggage was opened and no questions asked so we were able to take all our medical supplies through without a hitch. These were greatly appreciated by the folk in Guichard.

7. The seventh miracle was that we all enjoyed good health, worked in harmony, were truly committed and willing to be content in whatever situation we found ourselves – our meals, sleeping facilities, bathroom amenities, light or darkness. We were fortunate in having adequate water.

8. The eighth miracle was, there had been no electricity in Guichard since the riots in April (in fact even Port-au-Prince was then receiving only two hours per day) and four days before our arrival electricity was restored to Guichard.

9. The ninth miracle is that one of our interpreters was a Haitian Minister, who most effectively interpreted, in particular for Rev. Lennox Scarlett and Rev. Mark Stewart when they preached. He was also great with the children in the VBS.

10. The tenth miracle was fair weather, so, although it was very hot, there was no rain to hamper our activities and no hurricane!

Conclusion

We extend our appreciation to Joan and Allemand and our hosts, the Mission Eglise Baptist in Southern Haiti (MEBSH). It was quite surprising to learn that in this denomination there are 450 congregations, a hospital, a convention centre seating several thousands, a clinic, university, 160 high schools, 300 primary schools, a bible college, radio station, teacher training school for home economics – all supported by missionaries from various countries.

We also appreciate the situation of our missionary there now that we have been, seen and shared a little in her life. We assured her of our continued support and informed prayers.

We hope and intend that this mission won't be a "one off" but will be ongoing and that others will find it possible to go.

Over the years the UCJCI has continued to keep in touch with Joan and family and to support her service in God's Mission. The Cayman Council of the UCJCI has been particularly swift in practical on the ground response to crises resulting from environmental disasters. Friends ensure that mission letters are exchanged. These action have strengthened the capacity of Joan and family to serve selflessly as they have.

As she approaches her time of retirement, it is heartening to know that the UCJCI is already putting initial plans in place to ensure that the gains of her long years of service will be protected in the interest of the Haitian People. We continue to thank God for his ongoing blessings on Joan and her family as they witness in Haiti.

All Saints' Presbyterian Church – Its Mission and Discipleship

Selby R. Ross

Introduction

The *Guyana Chronicle* of July 28, 2012 notes that the silk cotton tree (*ceiba pentandra*) is one of the largest trees in the American tropics and grows - in Guyana. The branches grow in horizontal tiers and spread widely. The diameter of the crown can be as much as 140 feet. Having an open umbrella shape makes it an excellent shade tree for those brave enough to stop under it.

This image is appealing because it helps us to think of the growth which the church has experienced in its 197 years in Guyana. The revival which the outreach work of the *All Saints' Presbyterian Church* has enjoyed since March 2007 is truly a blessing to the community. It also lends itself to a reflection on CANACOM's partnership and encouragement to us over these many years. CANACOM has been pleased to have partnered with us since 1986, the year of the start of this network of churches in mission partnership. From the early days, CANACOM has given Mission Empowerment Grants and strong encouragement and support to the work of the Presbytery of Guyana. The church has been blessed to have worked with communities and a wide array of partners to deepen our understanding of relevant, contextual mission.

In this article we share details of the varied aspects of the projects which had been designed to meet persons at the points of their needs. One special outcome of the project is that participants draw a sense of encouragement from the sensitive approach of the church. Workers in turn gain a strong sense of fulfilment.

Members of the community have been very helpful in being a sounding board as we have discussed, planned and implemented meaningful programmes with them. We continue to work faithfully in the areas of youth development, skills training, empowerment of women, prison ministry and youth employment. God has put an array of partners who generously share their resources for the successful implementation of our programmes. Their help has tremendously enhanced our ability to serve our communities. We marvel at their energetic participation but we share the awareness that we are all committed to the well-being of our community.

We are very clear in our understanding of partnership that alignments should be nurtured and forged among persons and groups who share the honourable aim of improving people's lives and enhancing a sense of dignity in their daily experiences. These alliances continue to be formed and maintained by groups including NGOs and international bodies. We work with the awareness and sensitivity that those persons, in particular, the ones who live in poverty need to sense that their voices are heard and understood. Further, hope arises when persons see advocacy in action, for example, in the provision of affordable day care. All our work is undergirded by sincere and consistent prayer for discernment and

resources. God continues to provide partners and they are identified in the descriptions of the different projects highlighted below.

It is a tremendous blessing to have been part of the movement which has guided the count of community projects from one to six over the past eight years. We thank God for having prospered the work of our hands and pray for His continuing mercies.

Highlights

Remembering Elder Marianne Tinnie

We pause to remember with great fondness and appreciation Elder Marianne Tinnie who made her transition in November 2014 after having given her best for her Lord. We do not mourn as those who have no hope because we are people of faith. Her boundless energy and drive are remembered each day as the project continues to grow from strength to strength as the foundation which was laid by herself and others with her continues to anchor the work with great tenacity.

As coordinator, she and her team opened the playgroup on the 12th January 2009 with five children. She remained in this position until the time of her passing. In July 2017, thirty-five toddlers graduated from our playgroup into the Nursery School system. Elder Tinnie would have been very happy to see how the project has grown and very proud of those who now serve. May her soul rest in peace.

Little Angels Playgroup/Day Care

Having been appointed as Senior Pastor of the All Saints' Presbyterian Church in March of 2007, the ministry which I have

been blessed to lead can best be characterized as a teaching ministry. We have established a networking relationship with several governmental and non-governmental organizations in Guyana. It is from the roots which grew out of the networking efforts that All Saints' Presbyterian Developmental Centre, in collaboration with the St. Francis Community Developers and Friends of St. Francis was launched on the 9th August 2010.

Mission

To facilitate a variety of capacity building and enhancement programmes for the social, cultural and economic development of youths, women and the entire family unit.

The All Saints' Presbyterian Church

All Saints' Presbyterian Church, New Amsterdam, is a nationally recognized heritage site. As a prominent historical structure which is situated strategically at the exit/entrance of the New Amsterdam/Canje/Corentyne route, it is well placed to provide intergenerational, interdenominational and international ministry service of a comprehensive nature. The Church throughout its years of existence has always demonstrated and embraced a strong commitment to community outreach activities that catered for the moral, educational, social and cultural needs of the citizenry.

After 142 years, the All Saints' Scots School was to be demolished. In response, the All Saints' Presbyterian Church decided to request the building from the authorities and to rescue it from demolition. As a result, in October 2007, land filling and re-siting of the structure in the church compound commenced. Basic

repairs and refurbishment works were implemented to make the building safe and habitable. With God's help we were able to complete the task.

Through the intervention of the St. Francis Community Developers (SFCD), UNICEF and members of the Church, materials and small equipment were donated, training arranged and other institutional support garnered.

In November 2009, a collaborative multimillion-dollar venture was started with St. Francis Community Developers through the Enhanced Public Trust Security and Inclusion (EPTSI) project. During the first phase of this (UNDP Partnership) project, a number of youths benefited from a sustained period of hands-on skills training (carpentry, masonry, brick laying, painting and plumbing).

Key relationships were also established with stakeholders and the community which became an integral part of our project, with trust being a major component of the success of this process.

Skills Training through the Citizens Security Programme (Ministry of Home Affairs)

The All Saints' Developmental Centre has been an avenue of training for youths in other neighbouring communities, approximately three miles from our location; beneficiaries completed this programme and graduated.

Community Dialogues

The organization is also engaged in outreach and dialogues in the community based on social and sensitive issues affecting the

citizens as a means of finding solutions, easing tensions, creating the foundation and opportunities for collaboration and garnering the full participation of all residents.

Development of Children's Playing Field

The organization established a children's playing field in 2009, equipped with swings, slides and seesaw with a donation from UNICEF. This playing field is open to all children within the immediate and adjacent communities. It is one of the only operational playing fields of its type in New Amsterdam and so is much appreciated.

Staffing - Little Angels Playgroup and Daycare

Rev. Cicely Adams Crawford – Coordinator

Mrs. Lonell A. Kilkenny - Head Teacher.

Staff:

Mrs. Hazel Moses (Babies)

Ms. Avella Sinclair (Toddlers)

Ms. Anne Edwards (Pre-schoolers)

Enrolment

Of a total of 62 children enrolled there are seven babies, 13 toddlers and 42 pre-schoolers.

Scholarship Support

Through the intervention of the St. Francis Community Developers of which Mr. Alex M. Foster is CEO, the organisation

obtained a two-year scholarship, fully sponsored by UNICEF and tenable at the University of Guyana where Mrs. Lonell A. Kilkenny graduated in Early Childhood Education.

Building Improvement

As a result of our partnership with the UNDP in March 2010, offices were constructed on the upper floor. This collaboration and funding was needed to address the improvement of the facility for the beneficiaries.

The genesis of the Playgroup/Day Care was rooted in a philosophy shared by our church and UNICEF. Our Christian mandate enjoins us to “Suffer the little children to come on to me...” and UNICEF declares “Put children first.” It was therefore not difficult for the church and UNICEF to team up and pool their resources to address expressed needs. The decision to establish a safe day care setting provided an urgently needed solution for working parents.

All Saints' Little Angels Playgroup/Day Care faced the daunting challenge of putting its community outreach activities to the test. We are happy that we passed with flying colours.

Our own confidence was boosted by this success to the extent that we were able to extend the services to children of neighbouring schools who participated in homework assistance, reading and other aspects of our after-school programme.

The present volunteers/caregivers at the centre must be congratulated for providing such a nurturing, validating, caring and

homely environment. We owe a debt of gratitude to our parents, present and past; they volunteered their time and responded to our call for help in a timely manner.

Thanks to the church, elders and members, public institutions (especially the Prison Service and New Amsterdam Technical Institute) and other community partners and individuals, whose support and contribution proved most invaluable and critical as we firmly believe that “it takes a community to raise a child.”

Our gratitude to Mr. Alex M. Foster, CEO, St. Francis Community Developers and Ms. Michelle Rodrigues, UNICEF Representative and all other volunteers.

SKYE Project (US-AID)

Skills and Knowledge for Youth Employment (SKYE) Project – Linking Youths to Opportunities in Guyana. Through this project 1500 young people from the ages 15-24 are trained. The two-year project provides targeted alternative sentencing, work-readiness training and livelihood coaching activities with the following objectives:

- Extending employment, education and skill-building opportunities for youth at-risk
- Strengthening re-integration of youth offenders into society.
- Strengthening enabling environment for youth development.

Implementing Partners:

Catholic Relief Services (CRS)

Guyana Youth Business Trust (GYBT)

Volunteer Youth Corps (VYC)

Youth Challenge Guyana (YCG)

All Saints' Presbyterian Developmental Centre

US Peace Corps (Guyana)

Peace Corps Guyana is a United States government agency that promotes world peace and friendship. Its goals are to help:

- (a) the people of Guyana in meeting their need for trained men and women
- (b) promote a better understanding of Americans among Guyanese
- (c) promote a better understanding of Guyanese among Americans

Every year the United States sends American volunteers to serve in areas of education, health and environment. Currently, Sarah Shirley serves as a Peace Corps Health volunteer along with Marva Gordon, her community counterpart. A small grant was applied for to improve computer literacy and work readiness in youths and adults in New Amsterdam through computer classes at All Saints' Presbyterian Developmental Centre in September 2016.

After the grant was approved, the programme was established in 2016 and continued into 2017. Members of the community benefitted greatly. We look forward to continuing our support for US Peace Corps volunteers to help in building a better Guyana.

All Saints' Agriculture Centre (ASAC) Project

This project is aimed at enhancing and empowering residents of the community through agricultural means that respond to present

and emerging challenges at the community level. Through these interventions, the Centre hoped to improve the livelihood of residents which will ensure that they can take care of all their families' needs. Special care was taken to design objectives which would answer the needs of women and youths between the ages of 15 and 30 and women, especially single parents. Beneficiaries will be both directly and indirectly involved in all project activities.

Women will be able to:

- (a) learn to engage in agriculture utilising modern methodologies and the ability to approach farming in an integrated manner,
- (b) acquire fresh vegetables at a cheaper rate
- (c) find different ways of becoming employable

Youths will be able to:

- (a) learn to develop the love for agriculture and farming at an early age.
- (b) See it as an alternative career choice
- (c) Executive agricultural activist using modern technologies which reduce the stigma
- (d) associated with farming
- (e) learn how to implement farming methods in the absence of large land space available to them at their schools
- (f) Students involved in agriculture for school and CXC projects can benefit from practical sessions (e.g., at Berbice High School, New Amsterdam Technical Institute,

New Amsterdam Multilateral Secondary School, Berbice Educational Institute, Tutorial Academy and Vryman's Erven Secondary) in Agricultural Science subjects

The Organisation:

- (a) The All Saints' Presbyterian Developmental Centre (ASPDC) will benefit from fresh produce to assist in the preparation of meals for the community canteen service.
- (b) The centre will see an increase in income because of the availability of fresh produce.
- (c) More volunteers will become part of the organisation.

Why is the project necessary? This project is necessary in the community for the following reasons:

1. It will create employment opportunities in the agriculture sector for residents with special focus on single parents on a short and long-term basis. Over the past several years the unemployment rate has risen from 14% to 39% in the town of New Amsterdam and its environs. This is mainly due to the closure of the Bermine Bauxite Company, construction of the Berbice River Bridge, scaling down of the Rose Hall Canje Sugar Estate and among other reasons, a general contraction of private sector/economic activities in the town.
2. The project will enhance better access to healthier foods at much better prices. Residents will have a year - round access to fruits, vegetables and aquaculture which would equate to economical and healthy benefits.

3. It will establish the basis for training in agricultural practices which would see the diversification of farming into skills as well as the application of non-traditional methods such as preservation and greenhouse farming and the use of modern technology.
4. The critical need to complement volunteers' involvement at local levels requires some funding which is a necessary factor in ensuring high standards are maintained and the continuous implementation of activities sustained. This will support training and capacity building of experienced and unskilled volunteers who are assigned skill-related tasks within the community.
5. The private sector's focus on political patronage and survival, given the complex and evolving political environment in the country, has often proved disadvantageous for group and NGOs such as ours, especially with regard to funding.
6. All Saints' Presbyterian Developmental Centre, as an organisation, is becoming a household name and a reliable source for empowerment opportunities which means the need for project services is increasing at a rate beyond the Centre's ability to satisfy demand.

Mr. Alex M. Foster and a group of faithful volunteers at the Developmental Centre collaborated with Oldendorff Shipping Inc., a Bauxite Enterprise in Guyana in the preparation of the land for farming. Mr. Foster also assisted us in contacting *Food for the Poor*,

Guyana, who provided nurseries of tilapia for the pond as well as feed. Through *Food for the Poor*, a two-bedroom house was erected with living accommodation for a family within the Developmental Centre.

All Saints' Presbyterian Church Prison Ministry

Executive Summary

The All Saints' Presbyterian Church throughout its existence of 189 years has always demonstrated and embraced a strong commitment to community outreach activities.

Located immediately behind the Church is a small plot of land belonging to the Presbytery of Guyana for which All Saints' is the custodian. For many years the land has been leased to the New Amsterdam Prison Authority annually for the cultivation of 'cash crops' by the inmates. In January 2008, we were overjoyed when the prison authorities agreed that we could become involved in a weekly ministry to the inmates which has become known as the Outreach Evangelism Ministry.

Volunteers were recruited and training offered to prepare them for the task. There are five prisons in Guyana. However, the New Amsterdam prison is the only one where females on remand or being sentenced are held regardless of the inmates' geographical area or nationality. We were assigned to the female section of the prison. Visits to the inmates are done weekly on Thursdays, starting at 1:00 p.m. and lasting an hour.

Our mission is to encourage the inmates through:

- Bible Studies
- becoming spiritually grounded
- engaging in reflection in order to transform their lives

Through the Guyana Bible Society and the Ebenezer Lutheran Church Christian Education Department, New Amsterdam, we receive supplies of Bibles which are distributed to inmates.

It is indeed rewarding to see the interest shown by some inmates. A particular group within the prison is known as the Republic Drama Group. On special occasions during the church year, written requests can be made to the Officer-in-Charge for them to perform in the worship service or at fundraising activities, subject to the members' availability, that is, at Christmas, Easter, Mother's Day, Father's Day and so on. These are but a sample of the group's range of activities.

The relationship with the prison staff is remarkable and sometimes we are called to pray for the inmates during very stressful times. The benefits of this ministry are not one-sided. The male prisoners help maintain the churchyard (i.e., cut the grass, trim the trees), the children's playing field (Little Angels Playgroup/Day Care) and the church's general sports ground – all through networking and partnership. This 'sweat equity' is much appreciated by the church.

We enjoy ministering to the inmates. We experience great joy upon seeing their response, hearing their comments and being there to see them working towards making positive changes in their lives. For the nine years of ministry, we have seen only two repeat

offenders but we are unable to say how inmates cope after their release from prison. Being the only Female prison in Guyana it covers several geographical areas (including ten regions) and neighbouring countries. We have seen inmates from countries including Venezuela, Suriname, Brazil, Caribbean Islands, Canada, USA, Nigeria, Ghana and South Africa.

We are very thankful to God that this ministry came into being and that God has used the skills and talents of the willing volunteers in taking His love to others during their time of incarceration.

Their lives can be “transformed by the renewing of their minds” (Romans 12:2). Hebrews 13:2 asks us to “Remember those that are in bonds, as bound with them; and them which suffer adversity, as being yourselves also in the body.”

All Saints” Presbyterian Developmental Centre

We offer a wide range of community empowerment programmes in order to equip persons to manage their lives successfully. These include:

- Life and Skills Training
- Literacy and Leadership
- Capacity Building
- Advocacy

There is an ongoing fundraising programme to guarantee the sustainability of this important work.

What a mighty God we serve. Angels bow before Him. Heaven and earth adore Him. What a mighty God we serve. These words from a popular chorus remains with us at all times.

I thank God that through the power of the Holy Spirit I answered His call to be a Servant and labourer in His vineyard in New Amsterdam, Berbice and the environs. I thank God for all the help that he has provided us. After a multifaceted career, God called me to the ministry in 1995.

In reflecting on the programmes which have been mentioned in this article, I thank God for the rich partnerships that He has put in place for the design and continuation of this work in Guyana. It has often been said, that God sends us but that He also equips us. It is in this vein that I mention that my higher education culminated with a Doctoral Degree in Theology. My thesis was “Christian Faith, Family and Community.” This began my preparation for my role as senior Pastor at the All Saints’ Presbyterian Church. There I have found a very willing and dedicated group of persons who continue to work with excitement and to face all the challenges that emerge.

My 41 years of living abroad offered the opportunity of new experiences and new ways of approaching problem solving. This, combined with the persevering quality which is present among my fellow workers who had spent their entire career in Guyana has proven to be a good fit. We daily combine our efforts and energies and deepen our networks among various persons of good will. All this to the glory of God!

Charge

I would like the church to become even more involved in the operational activities of the centre by:

- showing their appreciation in a more robust manner
- giving more support in cash and kind
- volunteering willingly
- offering encouragement

The All Saints' Presbyterian Developmental Centre, Little Angels Playgroup/Day Care, Model House/Shade House Farm, Tilapia fish farm are all extensions of services to the families of New Amsterdam community and its environs. All these projects have been a blessing to the wider community and have been developed to the glory of God. It is the same God that is looking forward to our continued energies in this direction. We can be assured of God's continued provision.

Rev. Dr. Selby R. Ross, Pastor and Rev. Cicely Adams Crawford, coordinator, are overwhelmed at times. We need persons from the congregation to offer their help in supporting the skills training being offered. Many of our young people are at home unemployed. There are some youths who have written the CXC exams and are not venturing out to learn something new or enhance their skills. These young church members need to be earnestly invited to come out and benefit from the courses which are offered.

The fact that many who take advantage of our programmes are from the wider community is a wonderful vote of approval. We look

forward to welcoming even more persons as awareness of our programmes grows. The pastor, co-ordinator and members of the All Saints' Developmental Centre extend sincere gratitude to:

- United States Development Programme
- Department of International Development
- United Nations Children's Fund
- Food and Agriculture Organisation
- CANACOM
- USAID, Guyana
- Partners of America
- Government of Guyana
- St. Francis Community Developers
- Friends of St. Francis
- Beneficiaries
- Tutors
- Building materials suppliers for the Developmental Centre
- Oldendorff Shipping Inc.
- New Amsterdam Prisons
- United States Peace Corp Volunteer, Guyana
- New Amsterdam Technical Institute
- Mayor and Town Council
- Printed and Electronic Media Houses, Guyana
- Parishioners of All Saints' Presbyterian Church
- Gordon's Stationery and Office Supplies

We look forward to your continued support as we seek to promote the continued development of the Centre. Except the Lord build the house they labour in vain that build it: except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh in vain. (Psalm 127:1).

ARISE - Light in the Darkness

Deb Rapport

Introduction

ARISE Ministry is a mission of the Presbytery of East Toronto (the Presbyterian Church in Canada) which offers hope to individuals involved in the sex trade by providing a ministry of outreach, case management, and pastoral care. Its objective is to offer hope and pastoral support to survivors of human trafficking and individuals involved in the sex trade by empowering these individuals in the achievement of their goals.

It focuses specifically on helping individuals who have been sex trafficked, sexually exploited or experienced gender violence by providing education and training through our case management programme, and working towards ending cycles of poverty and inequality. Among the priorities through which it works are:

- ***Education and Training:*** by providing life skills training through a weekly case management programme that will teach participants about boundaries, stress management and communication. This programme also works with participants on setting educational goals and making appropriate referrals to various educational and training programmes.
- ***Poverty and Inequality:*** through offering a goal-oriented case management programme, support and life-skills. These

case management programmes provide one-on-one support working with participants on budgeting, housing, employment, and educational opportunities. The case management primarily supports individuals who are or have been involved in the sex-trade as they seek to explore other opportunities. The case management programme typically works with each participant for 16-weekly sessions, but recognizes that various life circumstances such as substance abuse, intimate partner violence, and trauma may require additional support.

- ***Gender and Violence:*** by promoting the health and safety of vulnerable women through participation in a free weekly self-defence class. This class is offered to ARISE participants, street-involved and vulnerable women through a partnership with a local martial arts academy.
- ***Human Trafficking:*** ARISE works to address and prevent the sexual exploitation of children and youth by working with families to strengthen and empower young people. This includes providing support to families struggling with the sexual exploitation of a family member. ARISE works to address and prevent the sex trafficking by working collaboratively with community partners and child protection agencies through the sharing of information and support of children and youth. This work includes facilitating training for youth workers in high-risk communities to enable them to better understand and prevent sex trafficking within these communities.

ARISE encourages and empowers congregations to care for children, youth, and vulnerable individuals in their congregations and communities, and stresses the importance of congregations in the prevention of sexual exploitation.

Tiana's Story

On a Thursday evening, just before midnight our outreach team gathered in my office in the Regent Park area of Toronto. Introductions were made and updates shared, as we placed our pretty satin outreach bags into backpacks.

A few of our long-serving volunteers were present and we could have two teams for outreach, meaning we can see more people and cover more ground. Before we left my office, we prayed together asking that we would shine the light of God's love through our outreach ministry.

Early into our outreach, my team saw Tiana¹, who I had been connecting with over the past month. She had been to see me at my office earlier in the week when a cold front hit Toronto as summer came to an end. Tiana is from the Caribbean¹ and was not prepared for this temperature drop. She needed warmer clothes and the visit to the office was largely focused on support accessing warmer clothing. When we met during outreach Tiana said she would call me and come see me at the office in the following week.

That movement out of the darkness of the limited conversations that we can have on street corners and darkened doorways, into the light of daytime at the ARISE office is significant. This is a leap of

faith and an act of hope.

Our outreach continued and at the mid-way point we were to meet with the other outreach team. They were coming from the street Tiana works on. My phone chimed with a message from the outreach team: Tiana had just been the targeted victim of a hate crime motivated by issues of race, gender, and sexuality.

Tiana came to Canada full of hope about the possibilities that “The true North strong and free”¹ could offer her.

ARISE’s outreach team had witnessed the attack. They stayed with Tiana, comforting her and standing with her as she reported the incident to the police.

When hate tried to reign in the darkness, ARISE Ministry’s outreach team shone the light of God’s love. The amazing truth of the Good News is that light shines in the darkness and darkness does not and cannot overpower it.

ARISE is pleased that through the partnership between CANACOM and the Presbyterian Church in Canada, we are able to work with all of God’s people here in Canada.

Sharing Gospel through Steel Band Music

Denyse Rattansingh-Atwarie

Introduction

Acts 1:8 states, “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem; and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” As is the case with many other churches, the Church of Scotland in Trinidad (COST) continues to seek new ways of sharing the gospel with others. We are conscious that we live in a time in which many persons are unchurched and that it is our Christian duty to be concerned about the spiritual lives of such persons. We have included in our thinking and praying a number of elements which are intended to invite people into fellowship. These include:

- The creation of a church culture that encourages intentional efforts to bring the lost to Christ
- Praying for the unchurched
- Committing to develop relations with the unchurched
- Being a safe haven for the spiritually wounded
- Accepting persons as they are
- Teaching for spiritual transformation
- Showing and telling people that Jesus makes a difference
- Recognizing that some church traditions keep people away from the fellowship
- Being willing to change

- The commitment of pastors and leaders to a willingness to alter practices in the church which might discourage the unchurched from accepting invitations to participate in the programmes of fellowship.

These new ways do not seek to replace traditional approaches which are part of the culture of the church.

The Church of Scotland in Trinidad (COST)

The Church of Scotland in Trinidad (COST) was established in 1836 by Rev. Alexander Kennedy of the Greyfriars Secession Church, Glasgow, as the Church of Scotland's response to taking the gospel abroad. At the time the membership was drawn from the newly emancipated slaves. The church has survived for more than a century with a membership drawn from a broader culture. The present COST is a merger of the Greyfriars congregation with the St. Ann's congregation, originally the Free Church founded in 1846 by the Portuguese who fled from their homeland because of persecution.

Regardless of where a church is physically placed, the message of Christ's love remains the same as does the instruction that the church should continue in sharing the gospel. The COST in the 21st century has the same mandate given in Acts 1:8 and the same Holy Spirit which continues to guide the work. We are committed to be Christ's witnesses in Trinidad and Tobago. However, to limit our witness to these Islands would not be displaying obedience to the verse above. We are therefore committed to taking the gospel to a wider domain. This article examines how the use of a local cultural

tool has been adopted by our church in a joyful sharing of the gospel both at home and abroad.

Creation of the Steel Band in Trinidad

Steel pans (steel drums) were created on the Caribbean island of Trinidad in the 1930s. Non-traditional instruments like scrap metal, metal containers, graters and dustbins were used in then what was called tamboo bamboo bands. However, by the 1930's these metal instruments dominated the tamboo bamboo bands. The bamboo tubes were eventually abandoned and replaced by the metal instruments. These early metal pan bands were a rustic combination of a wide variety of metallic containers and kitchen utensils which were struck with open hands, fists or sticks. Through experimentation, coincidence, trial and error, and ingenuity on the part of numerous innovators, the metal pan bands evolved into the steel pan family of instruments. From such humble beginnings, the steel pan has been developed to produce the full range of musical notes, enabling the formation of steel orchestras of all sizes. The only musical instrument invented in the 20th century, it is the national instrument of Trinidad & Tobago and is used widely in schools, churches and panyards – homes of the large steelbands which compete annually during the Carnival season.

The Birthing of COSTOS

Church of Scotland Trinidad on Steel (COSTOS), a steelband with the purpose of spreading the gospel was the brainchild of Rev. Garwell Bacchas. Seconded from the United Church in Jamaica and

the Cayman Islands, he served as Moderator of the Church of Scotland Trinidad from 2005 - 2015. Rev. Bacchas had come to Trinidad with a deep understanding of mission and the sharing of missionaries and he had had a long association with CANACOM. Prior to and during his time in Trinidad the links continued. A long-term development plan for the church was drafted by Rev. Bacchas and his team. He had a clear idea that the steel pan should be incorporated into the music, worship and outreach ministry of the Greyfriars/St. Ann's Congregation. This would be used as a means to encourage youth participation and church growth and development. In May 2012 he approached Ms. Leiba Trotman with a proposal surrounding the adoption of the steel pan into the life and ministry of the church. Ms. Trotman, who had recently started to attend the church, was a gifted musician, holding a B.A. in Music from the University of the West Indies. She was also an experienced pannist of 38 years, having played with several large bands locally and on tour abroad. She first started arranging for the steel pan in 1990 and has had several successes over the years with individual students as well as with school bands.

‘Running with’ the Idea

The members of the Youth Group were the first to be tutored. Pan became a weekly activity of the Group. Not all the young people were keen on playing but at least eight were interested. Leiba managed to acquire free of charge, one set each of bass pans, guitar pans, double seconds and two tenor pans. In July 2012, COSTOS made its debut in church playing “Majesty”. The congregation loved

the addition of the steelband to the worship service and since then, it has been customary for COSTOS to play in church on the fourth Sunday of each month.

Despite targeting youths in the community, the initiative also attracted senior persons from the congregation. COSTOS is unique in that its members range in age from seven to 70 and over. It was described by someone as an ‘All-age band’! COSTOS is also typically Trinidadian in that it comprises many ethnicities. It is worthy of mention that most of these persons had no previous experience in playing the steel pan. Practice sessions were held on Fridays and Saturdays in the Church hall from 4:00 p.m. to 5:30 p.m. and 2:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. respectively. The band was trained to play mainly gospel medleys and favourite hymns, but has expanded its repertoire to include well-known ballads, classical and contemporary music which incorporates a Caribbean flair in the arrangement of the pieces, including Jamaican Bob Marley’s world-renowned piece “One Love One Heart”.

COSTOS in Edinburgh Scotland

Less than six months after its debut, the band was invited to play at the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland in Edinburgh in May 2013. It seemed a daunting task for such a fledgling band! Many things had to be put in place in just a few months – travel documents, flights, shipping of the pans, uniforms and a repertoire.

This invitation symbolized a momentous opportunity which could not be passed up since we wanted to remain faithful to taking

the gospel far and wide. Every effort was made to enable the band to get to Edinburgh. The World Mission Council of the Church of Scotland liaised with our twinned partner church, Methilhill and Denbeath Parish Church, to arrange accommodation and transport for the group throughout their stay. They also sponsored airfares for four persons and paid for the pans to be shipped to and from Scotland. The church financed the remaining expenses by fundraising and donations.

Eight players travelled to Scotland chaperoned by Rev. and Mrs. Garwell Bacchas. Elder Margaret Ng-See-Quan – Manager Leiba Trotman – Instructor/Arranger Elder Fernella McCarthy Afiba Stephens – Student Barry Lake – Student James Smith – Student Xynoya Simmons – Student Sierra Young – Student

The band was given fifteen (15) minutes to minister at the Opening Night of the General Assembly. It was the first time that many persons attending the General Assembly would have heard their favourite hymns being played on such instruments and with such gusto. The band received a standing ovation – the first time this had ever happened! It was heart-warming to see almost everyone standing, swaying to the music and singing along with the band as they played “All as One” to the tune of “Auld Lang Syne”. The Spirit of God indeed filled that place and there was a sense of unity. Such was the impact that one Scottish Minister in preparing his sermon for Pentecost Sunday (the Sunday after the General Assembly) said “Custos provided a new Pentecostal Experience for the Church of Scotland. The band ministered in four (4) other General Assembly related activities.

COSTOS in Methilhill and Denbeath

An extra week was spent with our twinned partner church in Fife and two nights in the far north of Scotland in the town of Dingwall. There we played at a concert in the church and heard Scotland's top Gaelic choir perform. The response was amazing; everyone stood, some dancing in the aisles and clapping to the music! We had the opportunity to play in a number of other venues, including some schools, and during that time the spirit of the Lord was wonderfully felt.

COSTOS at home

COSTOS has found a firm footing at home in Trinidad and Tobago. The band has a fixed place in the music ministry of the church, ministering on every fourth Sunday and on special occasions. Over the past three years COSTOS has hosted an annual Christmas concert. The attendance has increased annually attesting to the quality of music ministered. In July 2017, COSTOS pioneered an event called "GOSPELRAMA" in which other church steelbands were invited to minister. The intention behind GOSPELRAMA is to form an ecumenical steelband community to take the gospel outside of the churches and to minister to a wider community in public places. All COSTOS events are anchored by the Word of God. Brief 'sermonettes' are shared at every event along with the beautiful arrangements of music.

COSTOS and Wider Community Involvement

They have played at our Twinning and Family Fun Day in Arouca and at the Annual Palm Sunday Walk, sponsored by the Downtown Pastors Association. They were also invited to perform at weddings, conferences, family days and community events.

Challenges

COSTOS has also experienced a number of challenges such as inconsistency in attendance among youth members, limited equipment which prevents the growth of the band, transportation of equipment when performing at various venues and the costly maintenance (tuning, replacing and acquiring) of the instruments. Despite these challenges COSTOS aspires to projected goals in the future such as participation in the National Music Festival and travelling to spread the gospel internationally.

Reflection

The Life and Work magazine of the Church of Scotland asked this question in its July 2013 issue, “How will you remember the General Assembly of 2013 and what was your personal highlight?” The Rev. Douglas Wallace, minister at East Kilbride, Stewartfield, is quoted as saying, “I loved the praise from the Trinidad Steel Band too. It was just so authentic.” Rev. Elisabeth Cranfield, minister of our twinned partner church is also quoted in the “WM” publication of the Church of Scotland as saying, “The recent visit of the steel pan band – COSTOS (Church of Scotland on Steel) – was a truly inspirational and unforgettable experience for Methilhill and

Denbeath Church and for our community.” She ended her interview by adding, “For those of us who were able to accompany COSTOS to its hugely successful appearances at the General Assembly, Heart and Soul and Hollywood Palace it was with great delight, and some pride, that we watched hundreds of people respond so positively to the music from what we feel able to think as ‘our steel pan band’.

The manager of the band, Mrs. Margaret Ng See Quan wrote in her report about the experience in Scotland with the band as, “We were being witnesses unto Jesus not only in Trinidad but in Europe and in America and in Africa and Asia, the uttermost parts of the earth, represented at the General Assembly and also at Dingwall. What an awesome honour! What an absolute privilege!”

The trip to Scotland gave us a sense of “Heaven on Earth” as the sweet music touch lives in a significant way. This was the gospel according to “Pan Music”. We experience the power of Pan Music and its relevance in Ministry. The steel band serves as a powerful tool that unites young people in spreading the gospel in a way that is no way boring to them. One can see the level of commitments, enjoyment and excitement that this ministry brings to the young people in particular and the general church family as a whole.

Looking into the Future

COSTOS is excited about where God will take us next. We believe that our purpose is to glorify God in what we do; therefore, we must strive to do our best always.

It is our hope to continue Gospelrama on an annual basis and seek opportunities to team up with other churches to share the gospel on the promenade or in the squares where people are passing by. That remains our mission!

Hands Down

'Using resources and expertise to engage young people within the church to fight against domestic abuse and improve lives.'

Trishtana De Cunha

Introduction

The Training in Mission (TIM) Programme was established by the Council for World Mission (CWM) in 1977 to support young people in discerning their call to mission. After all these years, TIM hopes that on completion of the programme, opportunities for mission will be opened for these persons who are willing and able to go into service. I was blessed to be a participant in TIM (May to November 2016). This time of training provided space for quiet reflection and prayer in order to sense the initial steps of my mission journey. My life has been doubly blessed to be part of the CWM and part of the Caribbean and North America Council for Mission (CANACOM). My church, the Guyana Congregational Union, has been part of CANACOM since its inception in 1986.

In Guyana we continue to rejoice that the CWM had the vision to have supported the formation of CANACOM. It was during the time of reflection whilst I was in TIM that the idea of outreach work with abused persons was dropped into my spirit by God. The Hands Down Project is the outcome.

With the help and support of my Minister, Rev. Paulette Hannibal, family, friends and church members in the Guyana Congregational

Union, on 11th March 2016, the Hands Down Project was launched with Mark 6:34 as our guiding text. It is hoped that this organization will make a strong contribution to work which is being done by the church and some groups in the wider society to address the matter of domestic abuse.

Establishing Hands Down

In a world of destruction and brokenness, God is calling us to a life of fullness. God is calling us to bring healing to those that are hurting in our communities, churches and the outside world. God is also calling us to bring hope to the hopeless and prepare a table for those who are abandoned and shunned in our society. These were some of the beliefs that inspired Ms. Trishtana R. De Cunha, a young woman from Guyana, to form ‘Hands Down.’ Hands Down is a non-governmental organization committed to eradicating domestic violence and empowering young people in Guyana and is affiliated to the Guyana Congregational Union.

Motivation

Ms. De Cunha was enthusiastic and mentally equipped to bring change to her community. She had been a victim of domestic abuse and this propelled her to begin her work with Hands Down. Regardless of her unfortunate past she was determined to bring light to her darkness and to light a candle for those who are in similar situations. As a silent victim she imagined that there are many who are affected in the same or similar situations within and outside of the church but remain silent because of victimization and fear.

Empowerment became her number one priority. Her experience with abuse had broken her, but she sought to bring happiness, strength and healing to those who suffer from the claws of this pandemic. Ms. De Cunha observed the church's overwhelming reticence, for many reasons, to act directly on social issues, and so she aimed to be the link that bridged the gap between those who are in the church and those outside.

A dream inspired by the Training in Mission (TIM) Programme

The dream to create a safe haven for those who are directly or indirectly affected by domestic abuse and to empower young men and women within communities across Guyana was as a result of her experience at Training in Mission (TIM).

Training in Mission is a programme hosted by the Council for World Mission (CWM). The CWM has for many years worked as partners in mission with CANACOM. For seven months participants experience life in several countries around the world including Taiwan, Fiji, Kiribati and New Zealand and are challenged to locate God's mission in various contexts. TIM enables participants to discover perspectives and to develop skills for a life of witnessing and service to people near and far.

The Guyana Congregational Union (GCU) and Mission

The Guyana Congregational Union was established on the principle of mission and over the years has continued to be involved in a number of relevant mission activities. However, because the demands are many some aspects of social need have not received

adequate attention due to factors including lack of human resource, training/expertise and particular material resources. The church has been very vocal about spirituality but there is still room for more work in tackling some deeply sensitive issues which are rooted in the heart of the community. Because of the church's inability to make an adequate response some young people are without guidance and some feel a sense of hopelessness. Hands Down's aim is to support this aspect of the church by encouraging voluntarism and community development within and outside of the church among young people.

Voluntarism

This could include volunteering at orphanages, helping the elderly within and outside of the church, meeting the needs of the homeless and less fortunate and so on. Some of these activities are taking place and through this strategy the church expects to promote communities of strong, equipped young people and become more engaged in communities across Guyana. The church does not and should not be holistically focused on Sunday's worship only for we are not just called to preach the word but to live it also. Hands Down provides scope for us to bring the word of God to life through our daily experiences and engagements. In a world that is desperately in need of hearing the voice and seeing the hands of the church in issues affecting their homes, Hands Down seeks to make that change and is very steadfast in its encouragement of voluntarism among participants and beneficiaries.

Goals of Hands Down

Hands Down was built on three goals:

- To listen
- To empower
- To help

These goals are vital to the achievement of the organization's mission. We make ourselves accessible to victims of domestic abuse, listen to their stories and then respond to our clients at their point of need by providing valuable information related to their specific case and facilitate counselling, training and empowerment workshops. We also assist them with access to skills development and employment opportunities. Finally, we help them in tangible ways, by making resources available to them as necessary and to the extent that we can. These resources include food, clothing, books or any other items that would add some degree of comfort to their day to day lives.

Events hosted by Hands Down

Since its launch, Hands Down has had two events. The *first* event took the form of a community concert held at Arundel Congregational Church, where Ms. De Cunha fellowships. This event was the official launch of Hands Down, and sought to bring families together to raise awareness and fight against domestic abuse within the community. All churches within the community were invited to participate either in song, dance, poetry or drama. There were also speakers from various organizations who shed light on the issue, as well as victims who shared their experiences. The chairman

of the Guyana Congregational Union, Rev. Noel Holder also shared his perspective on the church's strategy in dealing with domestic abuse. The event provided a space for persons to use their talent in a positive way to influence young people within the community.

The *second* event organized by Hands Down was a workshop in September 2017. This event brought young people from various non-governmental and governmental organizations together including. The Guyana Police Force, Guyana Girl Guides Association, Guyana Congregational Union, Guyana Responsible Parenthood Association and other institutions gathered to discuss the issue of 'Domestic Violence and Abuse' and identify possible solutions that will help eradicate this social ill.

Speakers from the Ministry of Education and the Guyana Responsible Parenthood Association enlightened participants on the issue of domestic violence and abuse as well as gender roles in society. During the brainstorming segment of the workshop, participants were encouraged to formulate solutions that would lead to the eradication of domestic abuse in Guyana. Some of the suggestions from participants included counselling for victims and perpetrators, outreach to schools, the use of motivational speakers, and the use of the creative arts to increase awareness among members of the community. The information gathered from this seminar will be used to create future workshops and projects that would ultimately take the organization a step further towards achieving its goals.

Responses to Hands Down

Participants completed an evaluation form which provided feedback on the success of the event. They also gave written and video recorded reviews. The sentiments cited below point to the importance of Hands Down's work:

"I love the initiative that Hands Down has taken to raise awareness among our young people and even the general public about domestic violence. This platform gives persons the space where they can express their ideas on how they can solve this issue that is affecting a lot of us. I must say that today's workshop was effective and it is going to build and encourage individuals to take life seriously and to put their hands down when it comes to domestic violence"

– Founder of UBUNTU Young People, Ms. Ominelle Boyce

"The sessions today were informative and I think one of the things that came across very clearly is that young people are very passionate about this issue and they believe that it should be eradicated."

– Guyana Congregational Union, Pastor Kaoma Fernandez

"I am very happy to have been associated with this event and chairing the proceedings. It was a great eye opener into the world of domestic violence. The presentations by the facilitators were spot on, and truly helped me better understand the issue. I believe more sessions of this nature are needed all across

Guyana, to get people talking. It's proactive actions such as these that start a movement"

– Global Shaper in the Guyana Hub of the Global Shapers Community, Ms. Onika Stellingburg

Challenges

Since the launch of Hands Down there have been several challenges and the major one is funding. Ms De Cunha and her team are committed to the success of the organization which is being funded by family members, friends, members of the local church and herself. However, in order to continue and deepen the work of Hands Down, accessing other funding sources is critical. There are plans to host fundraisers, seek support from donor agencies, as well as to solicit contributions from kind-hearted individuals who are willing sow into the mission of the organization for its continued work. Hands Down is quietly confident that CANACOM will find ways of supporting our work especially as during the period leading up to the year 2020, 'gender and violence' is one of CANACOM's mission priorities. We are pleased by the hopeful signs of progress which are being made by Hands Down.

Managing and Supporting Hands Down

Hands Down operates under the wings of the Guyana Congregational Union and is accountable to that body. Its work is also guided by an independent board which manages the activities of the organization. The management of Hands Down comprises a team of five core members – Trishtana de Cunha (President), Daniel

Prescott (Vice President), Naketta Anthony (Secretary), Dominic Husbands (Assistant Secretary/Treasurer), Andre Brandon (Treasurer) – and Monifa Edwards (Publicist and Communications Officer). The Guyana Congregational Young People's Union (GCYPU), the youth arm of the Guyana Congregational Union, has an active presence in Hands Down. Along with its Founder, Ms. De Cunha, who currently serves as 2nd Vice President of GCYPU, two other members of Hands Down are also from the Guyana Congregational Young People's Union. The team meets once per month or more frequently as required.

Long-Term Planning

The organization is engaging in forward planning. Its current objective is to provide essential training for its members and volunteers. This planning exercise is an important step for the organization and has to be treated with great sensitivity because of the nature of its mission. On an ongoing basis, the organization will host a series of workshops and seminars to educate persons and raise awareness about domestic violence. These workshops will take the shape of self-awareness and self-esteem sessions with the aim of empowering young men and women to become better versions of themselves and to develop self-love.

Specially designed behavioural workshops will be arranged to teach participants about emotion control, communication with others and developing and sustaining relationships. Skills training workshops will also be included to help equip young people with the

skills needed to become entrepreneurs and financially independent individuals.

For the *Hands Down Dream Team*, Mission is meeting the needs of God's people, not just spiritually but physically making yourself available for those who are marginalized and suffering. By going into their communities and being a part of their experience, one is able to really see what the needs of God's people are and become a vessel for them. Mission is not just preaching; it is a sense of being and doing, sharing, challenging and promoting liberty through Christ.

God is present in all of us and through helping others we are able to encounter God in his glory. It is our hope that through Hands Down more people in the world will experience God's grace and peace.

This project is about supporting the work of God and continuing his work on earth by preparing a table where the marginalized are welcome. Hands Down believes that evangelism and practical mission must go hand in hand and as such reflects on the Bible Story *The feeding of the five thousand*.

In this story it is important to observe God's strategy of engaging the people; Mark 6:34 states that Jesus was moved with compassion because they were lost and in need of a shepherd. Observing this, Jesus engaged the people through His teaching and also fed them even after being advised by His disciples to send the people away, saying *you give them something to eat*.

It is important to note three points from this story. Jesus observed that the people were in need and identified exactly what

they were in need of. He did not just spiritually feed the five thousand but also provided food to satisfy their physical need. He broke bread with them, not apart from them. It is our desire that Hands Down should be guided by this strategy.

Hands Down started out as God's direction to one single individual. God has given confirmation to the value of this work by raising up a team of persons who share the vision and are willing to help it to grow. Hands Down is grateful to God. We ask you to pray for us that we may be faithful to this mission.

What is the Mission of Your Church?

Margaret Fowler

Introduction

How do we talk, define, do mission in our congregations? What is the mission of the church? What should be the mission of the church? In many of our congregations we have nice little taglines that we believe will enhance the mission of the church, for example, ‘Minute for Mission’, the annual missionary service with a guest preacher to inspire us, or the Mission Development Fund (rarely used) topped up every year.

The question remains, what is the mission of the church? How do we define our mission? What does the bible say about mission? Do we understand the terms ‘Missional Church’, ‘Missio Dei’? Whatever the question, mission of the church is a vision, a mission, a calling.

There are clearly many ways of understanding mission and of course the Bible can help us. In his landmark book, *Transforming Mission*, the late David Bosch has set out what has become the ‘go-to-book’ for understanding mission.

So, what is mission all about? I begin with a quote from *Transforming Mission* which contains all the essential elements for not only understanding mission but also doing mission:

Mission is quite simply, the participation of Christians in the liberating Mission of Jesus, wagering on a future that verifiable experience seems to believe. It is the Good News of God’s love

*incarnated in the witness of a community for the sake of the world.*¹

That's a bit of a challenge for the church. How do we do that, where do we begin?

What the Bible Says about Mission

In the bible there is much to feast on when it comes to mission. As length does not allow me to go into detail, I will generalize a little. Immediately, we are drawn to “The Great Commission” in Matthew's gospel or as some would say, the great omission, as churches seem to be able to preach and teach about mission but lack the zeal to do mission.

How can we forget about the great missionary journeys of the apostle Paul? So, how do we move from our reading of these missionary texts to a mission praxis? Does mission only mean witnessing or does it come with other elements such as projects to help both individuals and community? I believe that mission is about making a difference, and thus engaging in mission also changes one as a person.

Look at Jesus' disciples. Look at Paul and Timothy, Priscilla and Aquilla, Euodia and Syntyche (Philippians 4:2). These were fellow workers; they struggled together in the gospel by helping spread the good news but also transformed the individual.

In 1 Cor. 16:16 Paul exhorts the Corinthians to be subject to the house of Stephanas, and to every fellow worker. So, it now becomes clear from a brief biblical insight that mission is everybody's business.

So how do we take the next step in moving from the biblical base to a theological praxis?

The Congregation as a Community Mission Practitioner

To begin with, let us remind ourselves that congregational ministry is difficult. Many congregations have a mindset of what mission is and is not. For some, mission is nothing more than the annual missionary Sunday service, or an opportunity to send money to some cause in a far distant land. As a result, many congregations fail to see or engage in mission on their own doorstep. What is it that makes it difficult for us to engage in mission? Does mission lack glamour and is mission expensive? When you look at the David Bosch quote, can you truthfully say that your Church is actually engaged in mission?

Many congregations simply design a programme or activity that is suitable and acceptable to the church members but totally ineffective in the community. Another scenario is that the minister may have a perfectly good mission activity to carry out in the wider community, but no back up from the congregation which has to be dragged kicking and screaming. Something has to be done; after all, it is a biblical mandate to go into all the world, when half of our churches can hardly step over the threshold of their own sanctuary. So, what should be done? Let me tell you my mission story, and how with a small congregation we developed a mission strategy and a project that works and serves the community.

Here am I: Send Me

Arriving in Jamaica in 1988 is a good start. As a missionary I was thrown in at the deep end, arriving on the back of hurricane Gilbert. Eventually I found myself training for full time ministry, upon completion I was sent to a rural charge, mandated to develop a drug rehab centre which was situated within the charge. Challenge 1: they never had a female minister before; Challenge 2: they did not want any rehab centre in their backyard even if it was a national church initiative.

So, the mission outreach at the rehab centre simply faded away and I focused on pastoral ministry and congregational capacity building. Now, having served there for eight years a call came from another charge, another mission opportunity – so, time to move. This time, it was a charge in a popular tourist area and a small congregation living on the edge. Did I mention before that to do mission one must be prepared to take risks?

The Negril community is a hive of activity due to the fact that it is one of the major tourist towns in Jamaica. The church is literally in the centre of the community and on the edge of what could be described as a “challenging area”. The church – very traditional in its worship, mission and overall general outlook – was just ‘barely ticking over’. As a social worker in a past life I knew that the first task would be to study the community; my analysis informed me that there were so many young people on the street corner just hanging around. Further investigations revealed that many of them from aged 15-25 were school dropouts with a low level or practically nonexistent level of education.

Could the church do anything? Should the church do anything? Would the church want to do anything? Now was the time for a little preaching on mission and indeed the relevance of the church.

Strategy of Coming Together

What could we do? We could create an educational support programme to help students stay in school. That was completed, but what else? Why don't we offer classes for students who had dropped out of high school? What a great idea, said one member; another said what if they are bad, violent, disrespectful and so on. As minister I said, "What a challenge." Let's go ahead. The project started on the verandah of the manse, then expanded into the church. Take these people into the sanctuary; however, classes were held there. More unattached youth came; we needed more space.

THEN IT HAPPENED, I received a phone call from a funding agency asking if I were interested in doing a project with sex workers, human trafficking. Not even sure what that meant, I agreed without any hesitation – let's go for it. What will I tell the church? This is where mission becomes risk-taking. This was the challenge for the congregation to now reinvent the mission ethos. It took a long time to get everyone on the mission page, but it happened and a church/community project was born or created or developed but a positive transformation took place and the formally sluggish congregation began to believe in itself.

This may sound like it was easy but developing the concept was time consuming work, as others got involved. At one point I was very enthusiastic about ecumenical input – great idea, but that is

even harder work as each denomination has its own theology to deliver and particular brand of faith to sell. So that plan fell by the wayside.

However, out of all the discussions and dialogue with other churches, service clubs, government and international funding agencies, emerged the Theodora Project,² a fledgling project with dreams and aspirations to transform individuals and create a missional community in a tourist mecca, a place where anything goes.

The Theodora Project Puts its Mark on the Community

From a small educational project, the Theodora Project has become a beacon in the community and a respected source on matters related to human trafficking. Today, the Theodora Project is partnered with HEART/NTA, the government skills training agency, and offers training in housekeeping, cosmetology, bar services, data processing as well as a project on lifeguard skills in conjunction with the Rotary Club of Negril.

Theodora seeks to encourage young people to develop high self-esteem, to make positive choices and to realize that everyone has a second chance. An integral part of the programme is not only to gain a skill and get a job, but to be able to deal with personal issues, anger management and as a result, a comprehensive counselling programme is in place. This is a project that cares, that supports, goes the extra mile, offers a coat and, of course, turns the other cheek.

Not all who have been through Theodora have been involved in

sex work, sexual exploitation or human trafficking but all of these young people are vulnerable. Left unattended they are then exposed to the vices of modern day society.

Prevention, educational opportunities, people who care, that second chance, someone to listen with a non-judgmental heart are all key components of the Theodora Project.

Theodora started with its roots firmly grounded in the Christian faith, so now, because of the Theodora Project the church is now in an excellent position both in terms of mission/ evangelism to make a difference not only in the community but also in the lives of the many young people who have connected with the project. The opportunity for the church to act puts this small congregation in a powerful place. In spite of all the financial challenges, the initial lack of interest and apathetic attitude, the development of the Theodora Project lifted the church from a backward-looking congregation to a church that can now view its future with a renewed sense of mission. There is now an urgency to complete work to generate plans and develop new ideas not only within the congregation but also the community itself.

The issue of human trafficking is now a key component of any church's mission. The former Attorney General of Jamaica, the Hon. A. J. Nicholson, has expressed the importance of the church's involvement in the fight against human trafficking. In a statement cited in a 2006 issue of the Jamaica *Observer* newspaper, he noted:

I believe that this one issue that the church can take on itself; they should grab it and run with it...It was as a result of the

church's advocacy why slavery was abolished and anytime the church puts its shoulders to any issue in our district, usually the church wins.

I would like to see the churches, telling members that this is something that we will have to fight on all fronts because I would like to see as many young persons as possible get the kind of exposure, training and education so they would not fall prey to all the 'smart alecs' that come around and deal with human trafficking.

Clearly the challenge for the church is to respond. We must begin to articulate what we have learned. We must address those in our immediate sphere of influence by talking in our workplaces, sharing with other congregations the nature of the human trafficking epidemic and how easily our young people can be catapulted into sexual exploitation.

All through the Old and New Testament, God expressed His heart towards those who experience injustice and the evil of humanity. As God's people we are constantly called to seek justice, encourage the oppressed, defend the cause of the fatherless and plead the case of the widow.

The End is Only the Beginning

In concluding, I ask again. What is the mission of the church? What kind of community is the church meant to be? In light of the awareness of our world's condition and our commitment to God's compassionate mission towards those who experience injustice,

developing the Theodora Project is one course of mission action.

As a church community we need to partner with organizations doing similar work, volunteer, give financially, spread the word and network. It's not just about doing good; it's also about having the desire to do something regarding the condition of our country.

It is about modelling a lifestyle of generosity and sacrifice. In other words, it is about embracing the world with the tangible love of Jesus Christ. Thus, says the Lord is the mission of His Church.

Caribbean Workers Outreach Project (CWOP) Simcoe, Ontario, Canada

Carlene Walford

Introduction

In common with other churches, CANACOM member churches know that God requires us to take care of His people. Secured in this knowledge and empowered by divine strength, the St. James United Church and the Webster Memorial United Church decided to explore the possibility of creating a programme which would minister to farm workers who had journeyed to Canada and who would continue to do so, to better their economic situations. In the same breath, both the Canadian and Jamaican church recognized that this programme contained within it, a win-win element in that the Canadian farmers and the wider community were benefitting and would continue to benefit from the presence of the Caribbean workers. Not only would the farming community be served but, the funds generated by this employment would also help to strengthen Simcoe's local economy.

This article contains accounts provided by a range of participants including ministers, farm workers, farm owners, their wives, children and other family members. These voices contribute some depth to our understanding of the value of the CWOP. (Participant interviews)

The decision to put in place a tailor made programme was not a difficult one. However, both churches recognized the need to work

with sensitivity in order to ensure its success. The survival, with relevance, of this project over three decades is worthy of commendation.

Background to the Project

In reflecting on the background to the project, Rev. Steven Chambers recounts in Twinings 1998 (*Resource Book for Twinning* 1998, Division of World Outreach, UCC, Ontario):

On November 1, 1987 the St. James United Church in Simcoe Ontario of the United Church in Canada (UCC) and the Webster Memorial United Church of the United Church in Jamaica and Grand Cayman (UCJGC) were twinned. The St. James Church, through the Division of World Outreach of the United Church of Canada, (U.C.C.) recognised that difficulties were being experienced by Seasonal Farm Workers from overseas. It was noted that some discomforts were particularly due to cultural barriers.

A solution was arrived at through the decision of inviting the United Church in Jamaica and Grand Cayman to share in the project by supplying a Project Minister, both males and females, who would spend some time in Canada among the farm workers. The Ministers involved were Rev. Oliver Daley of the Webster Memorial United Church and Rev. Steven Chambers of the United Church of Canada (UCC). The Project then began in 1988 with the Rev. Oliver Daley of the Webster United Church (Jamaica) who served as Project Minister for

the first two (2) years. The initial stage was to visit the Growers, so as to explain the purpose and intent and solicit their support and co-operation. This gave birth to the Caribbean Workers Outreach Project CWOP of the UCJCI and the United Church of Canada (UCC).

The aim of the Project has continued to be to “offer a sense of care” for workers who are far away from home, relatives, loved ones, friends and things familiar; an excerpt from its purpose statement reads:

Our Community benefits from the presence of the Caribbean Farm Workers through the employment relationship and related economic activity, but we believe there should be more to our contract. We wish to enhance our human relationship/s, to assist in making pastoral care available to those who are far away from family and home.

The project seeks to carry out its purpose through:

- (1) Pastoral care and visitation programme to the farms and the shopping mall.
- (2) Worship Service on Sunday nights at the Church.
- (3) Programmes of social entertainment.
- (4) Friendship links.

Timing and Financing

This project begins in September and ends in October. It is financed through the sources listed below:

- (1) Grants from the Division of World Outreach Mission and service funds.
- (2) The budget of the St. James Church.
- (3) Donations from other local United Churches (Canada).

According to the Rev. Steven Chambers (an Associate Minister of St. James United Church, Simcoe, Canada), in his paper "Partnership Possibilities, Jamaican Offshore Workers in Southern Ontario," 12,318 Farm Workers from the Caribbean worked in Ontario in 1989, the vast majority being Jamaicans. It is understood that the number could have been increased to approximately 14,000 this year (1990). These Farm Workers worked mainly in the Agricultural Section, in Tobacco, Vegetables and Apples. Some of these Workers arrived in Canada in April and left in November. The larger contingent however arrived in late August to early September.

Around the town of Simcoe, which is about 100 miles South West of Toronto, there are numerous Apple Orchards. On each Orchard there is an average of 15 workers. Housing accommodation which includes sleeping quarters, and kitchen is provided by the Grower. Workers team up to do their own cooking.

The work schedule is from 8:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. daily, including Sundays and they are paid at an hourly rate as are all Agricultural workers in Ontario. 25% of their weekly salary is deducted and sent back home as a kind of compulsory savings, other deductions include a tax which is refunded the following year. Provision for Unemployment Insurance and Canadian Pension Scheme are jointly paid by Growers and Workers. There is also a

Health Insurance and Compensation Scheme which are covered in full by the Growers.

Over the years the programme has evolved to include participation from other denominations and community members to help alleviate feelings of loss and isolation which some workers may experience. Changes which seek to assist the migrant workers and employers in the solution of a variety of problems have been incorporated into the programme. Both parties have expressed appreciation for the valuable contribution which this phenomenal programme has made in the creation of a work environment which promotes justice and harmony.

Participation of Clergy from the United Church in Jamaica and the Cayman Islands

It is not possible to over emphasize the level of appreciation which has been expressed by the farm workers on having the annual participation of Ministers from their own background and culture. The presence of the ministers from Jamaica symbolizes an invaluable degree of spiritual comfort. The migrant workers in Canada often operate in work settings which are very difficult, stressful and challenging. The ministers bring some relief and hope through the provision of times of worship which consist of the reading of the scriptures, singing of hymns and familiar choruses, and prayers. The workers feel especially blessed when prayers are offered on their behalf. The worship experience gives them the impetus to keep going as they are reminded that God cares for them and is with them in all situations and at all times. Although the

teachings on faith are known to many of them, the physical presence of ministers from their own countries provides them with an increased sense of fortitude. The presence of the Jamaican ministers helps them to reflect even more deeply on the commitments which they have made to their families in the Caribbean and serves as a reminder, to remain faithful to these commitments.

The Ministers reported that:

The farm workers understand that it is not mandatory for them to attend worship services, yet they participate with great enthusiasm and joy. Whenever I visit their barracks I sense a level of appreciation for the fact that someone cares. The workers are encouraged to go to church and do their best for their families, to stay on track and try their best not to stray. "For me it is a great eye opener to see where the farm workers live, I found it to be an austere setting." said the minister. He said he went on the farm for a day with the workers; it was hard, hard work and in very cold weather but it enabled him to understand and appreciate what they do. The Reverend said he believes those who are exposed to the programme can help people in communities to appreciate and value hard work. He said it is great for the economy in Jamaica as over time some build houses, and start businesses, support the needs of their families from the proceeds of their labour. The churches should continue to encourage the farmers to respond to the needs of the workers as together they build the economies of both countries.

....

Of the two female ministers who participated in the programme, one said she found the programme to be very fulfilling. She joined others in testifying of the relevance of the programme and thought that it should continue. She also commented on the Spartan living conditions which might cause the workers to feel homesick. Yet she was heartened that they appeared to have been happy and really enjoying their work bearing in mind future gains. To her, they are a good representation of the Caribbean proverb 'if you want good your nose have to run'

Her presence brought encouragement to the workers. They appreciated the fact that a female minister had come to sit with them to share the gospel as well as to offer counsel to them regarding personal matters. She said being on the programme opened her eyes to seeing God at work, taking care of the farm workers' every need. She saw much evidence of God being impartial in His provision for all. Since her return home to Jamaica, she has kept in touch with the workers and continues to encourage them. The ministerial work has also been extended to some of the wives/girlfriends and children of the farm workers to encourage and challenge them not to squander the money that is sent to them but to use it prudently, to save and appreciate what their loved ones are doing for their family.

....

Rev. Randy McKenzie, retired Minister of the Bradford United Church in Canada and currently a member of the coordinating committee had this to say regarding the programme:

“The CWOP – Erie has been a Ministry of Outreach within the United Church of Canada and Erie Presbytery in South western Ontario for about 30 years. This Ministry is a partnership between the United Church in Jamaica and the Cayman Islands and the United Church of Canada. There is also participation with churches from other denominations at the local level.

This Ministry serves migrant farm workers in the Brant-Haldimand-Norfolk Region of Ontario, mostly from Jamaica and also other Caribbean territories. It was developed initially in response to the concerns of members of the St. James United Church in Simcoe who wanted to raise the consciousness of local citizens about the “invisible” members of the community who came to Ontario during the spring and summer months to work on the farms in that area. Almost immediately there was a suggestion from some of the men who were missing an opportunity to worship that they would like to have a service. The Rev. Michael Beacom and the Rev. Stephen Chambers of St. James United Church began to conduct services in late July to early September to accommodate this need. It also led to a close relationship with The Rev. Oliver Daley of the Webster Memorial Church in Kingston, Jamaica. The Ministry was supported by the General Council of the United Church of Canada and local Baptist, Presbyterian and United Churches.

There is a coordinating committee which administers the Ministry with 4 workers currently a part of that committee. A Minister from UCJCI is contracted each year to travel to Canada to Minister to the workers through Sunday evening Worship Service and make midweek pastoral visits to the bunk houses of local farms where prayer services and fellowship are held. Earlier in the programme, a games night was held for our friends from the islands. Each year a Jamaican style barbecue is held with worship and lots of conversation among those who attend from both Canada and the Islands.

The Worship life of the CWOP has evolved over the years in that the pastor has included more and more assistance from the men who are attending, especially in the area of music. This has been very well received by all participants. The intention was to offer worship which is both meaningful and familiar to the men. This has also provided wonderful insight into different worship styles for people who attend from the local Canadian Churches.

I believe that this programme has continued by the grace of God, the strong partnership between the UCJCI and the UCC, and a very active desire to find the Spirit at work within our guests and friends from the Caribbean and the local community. We trust and pray that all are strengthened in faith as we meet one another in worship, in love and in community.”

....

Rev. J. Oliver Daley

In a 2017 interview with Rev. J. Oliver Daley he stated that the concept was developed for a Chaplaincy/Pastoral Care to be offered to the migrant workers. Once per week the workers used to be bussed to churches in Simcoe for worship, reflection and sharing of their faith. The ministry was geared towards identifying their needs, helping them to cope with crises at home i.e illness or deaths in the family as well as assisting new comers to adjust to the new environment. Rev. Daley said the program proved to be relevant to the emotional and spiritual needs of the migrant workers and the ministry of the church.

The fact that programme has survived is a testament to its effectiveness in filling a need in the lives of workers.

....

The Voice of Workers

Richard, one of the migrant workers, who has been going to Canada for over twelve (12) years, said the programme is very useful as it shows that someone cares about them. He indicated that when they leave their families and go to an unknown country and culture it can be heart-rending; but when the ministers come to share and encourage them, it certainly helps. He said some of the ministers will go with them in the field, and experience the pain, the

struggles and difficulties they have to endure especially during the very cold winter season, this he said shows just how much the ministers care for them. Richard indicated that the church services conducted by the ministers are usually very good as it allows them to worship in familiar ways. He is appreciative of the programme and wants on behalf of the other workers to express thanks to the United Church in Jamaica and the Cayman Island and the United Church of Canada for enabling the ministers to share with them, it is greatly appreciated, he said.

***Pedro**, another migrant worker for over twenty (20) years, said the program is necessary because as a Christian to be in a strange land for seven (7) to eight (8) months without their souls being spiritually fed can be dangerous; so when the Ministers come and minister to them it helps to strengthen their faith and keeps them grounded. His hope is that the program continues for many more years.*

Wider impact of worship programme

Whereas the project was originally conceptualized to satisfy the spiritual and emotional needs of a group of Caribbean migrant workers in Canada it is worthy to note that the local members of the churches being visited are also blessed by the worship and testimonies of the migrant workers and vice versa. Participating ministers have testified that the programme also opened the door for evangelism to take place. Evidence of this was seen when some of the migrant workers who previously had no relationship with God,

continued their Christian journey when they returned home. In some cases this led to baptism and a deeper commitment.

This programme continues to be a much appreciated mission partnership even after 30 years. Both churches thank God that they are able to meet the needs of the farm workers who find gainful employment so far away from home. The farm workers benefit from the coming of the Ministers and the Ministers are also blessed and challenged by the experience. They have all spoken of the invaluable and mutually beneficial nature of their journey with the men.

The following is what one minister had to say:

What did I learn about justice, economics, poverty and politics during my short term mission?

“That Justice is colourless; that a great and important part of economics is the people (the workers) and therefore the treatment of people is important. Poverty is not a condition of one’s financial status but the mind. I learnt that politics is an ever present reality that if not properly managed can cause great harm and injustice.”

What have I learnt about my own Christian calling?

“My calling to be a Pastor is not simply to lead and manage a congregation but to help the congregation to touch the lives of people in various organizations. To have an on-going appreciation of people – the work they do and the contribution they make.”

What did I learn about God through this mission?

“That God is with all His people and my connection with the workers in the fields reaffirmed for me that that is how God draws near to us and helps us as ministers to be the ‘God Presence’ in the lives of the people we serve.”

Sexual Abuse and the Church...

Diana Haydee de Graven

Introduction

Gender-based violence reflects and reinforces inequities between men and women and compromises the health, dignity, security and autonomy of its victims. It encompasses a wide range of human rights violations, including sexual abuse of children, rape, domestic violence, sexual assault and harassment, trafficking of women and girls and several harmful traditional practices.

To address this major issue, the Government of Suriname in 2009 passed the *Wet Bestrijding Huiselijk Geweld* (Law to Combat Domestic Violence) and activated the revision of the Penal Code on Moral Offences, thereby broadening opportunities for law enforcement agents to prosecute perpetrators.

However, there are still several gaps and challenges to be addressed. These include an inadequate reporting system, the lack of possibilities for coaching and probation of perpetrators, lack of an integrated system of data collection and analysis, and the acceptance of gender-based violence among many victims as a justified action.

In this context, the Reformed Church in Suriname along with other denominations and other religious bodies, partners with the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the Ministry of Justice and Police to support the Government of Suriname in the development and implementation of a National Gender Strategy to combat domestic and sexual violence. The arrangement is also intended to support

service providers to strengthen victims' social and legal access to protection and those populations especially vulnerable to gender-based violence such as, people with disabilities, adolescent mothers and indigenous people.

The Reformed Church in Suriname, therefore, fully embraces any initiative from the Ministry of Internal Affairs to help in ending gender-based violence. Gender and violence constitute one of CANACOM's mission priorities. As the youngest member church we feel strengthened in our fight against gender-based violence and conduct bible studies and small group discussions to increase members' awareness and knowledge about this issue as well as CANACOM'S other mission priorities.

I would like to share with you the results of an interesting bible study based on 1 Samuel 13: 1-22 which was held with some members of the Morgensterkerk. All participants came to the conclusion that the church should be more open to talking about gender-based violence with special focus on sexual abuse in order for the church to be more welcoming and accommodating of victims of sexual abuse, instead of making them feel alienated.

There is a suggestion for more members to acquire training in order to be better informed about gender and violence and the implications for families and the society on the whole.

Sexual abuse which falls under gender and violence is not a new phenomenon in today's world. Throughout our history and even in the bible there are, sadly, numerous references to and stories of sexual abuse. As a people of God we are called to do justice, protect, prevent and advocate on behalf of all who are involved.

It is high time we learn to speak plainly in the church about sexual abuse. The time we could bury our head in the sand is over. Our noses are being pressed on the facts all around us. That is a good thing. But how do we as churches go about it? How do we take into account the fact that at least one in ten churchgoers is corrupted by sexual abuse? How can the church do justice and offer shelter? And can the church also deal with perpetrators, bystanders and other stakeholders? When such questions are raised, our inability and lack of insight become painfully clear.

There are ministers who have never consciously met a sexual abuse victim. One could think: How could that be? But the answer is not that hard. Victims and perpetrators will keep silent. A church, a minister, just has to awaken the impression of not being open to their stories, and you will never hear them. One can hear sermons and read ecclesiastical articles. Many of these are excellent, and come from good intentions. However, if one listens with the ears of someone who has been sexually damaged it becomes a different ball game.

There is an event in the bible which addresses the problem of sexual abuse in a sharp and urgent way. It is the rape of Tamar by Amnon which can be found in 2 Samuel 13: 1-22. Unmistakable language is being used here. The fact that things are so clearly called by the name indicates that God has something to say to us. One must, however, take into consideration that this event has been described in a different time, another world, with other laws and habits, and one cannot transplant everything into today's context. Yet, by reading this text, one gets hurt not only by the strategies of

sexual abuse, the consequences and the inability to deal with it, but maybe also with the role of God in it all. However, before we get there, we must first see what is taking place.

The rape of Tamar took place in King David's time. Shortly before, David had committed adultery with Bathsheba, and had her husband Uriah killed. There is a list of fraud, rape and death. And sin goes on. One could almost say: "To the third and fourth generation." Amnon is one of David's sons, but he does not have the same mother as Absalom and Tamar. This makes him a half brother of Absalom and Tamar. As usual, biblical names are full of meaning. Amnon means "trustworthy," Absalom means "father of peace" or "rich in peace." In this story Amnon is the unreliable one, Absalom the wrecker and Tamar the victim who must remain silent.

It all starts with Amnon who preys on Tamar, his beautiful half-sister. He wants her. In the translation it seems that he still has conscientious objections: "she was a virgin, and it seemed impossible for him to do anything about it." What is meant is: she lived as a virgin in a separate, protected house, and Amnon did not see any opportunities to get her. His whole life is now only one question: how? He became sick because of his lustful desires for Tamar. In conversation with a friend, the perpetrators web was woven.

Whilst spinning that web, a list of fraud had already begun. To his friend, Amnon talks about Tamar as, "the sister of Absalom." When he talks to his father he speaks of her as "my sister." Without hesitation, he spoke of that which was convenient to for his intended meaning. They were not lies, but a version of truth, a manipulation

and playing with people's lives as well as their future. He was interacting with people as though they were things. He did not see Tamar as human, but as an object, as a toy – an item that was fit to be thrown away after you were done with it or when it no longer suits you.

By pretending to be ill, Amnon circumvented the rules. He requested Tamar come to him, so he created an opportunity to be with her. Upon reflection, Tamar ignored the protocol of being chaperoned, apparently in innocence, but ultimately to her own detriment. To increase his chances, the servants were sent away with a list of chores. When I read this, I immediately thought of all the stories of sexual abuse I have heard. The form differs, but each time one sees that a perpetrator willfully and skillfully creates a web in which the victim is captured. The perpetrators abuse the trust that their victims and families place in them. “What a nice man, a lovely woman, so good with children” we would often hear.

The meaning of Amnon's name is reliable but obviously the quality of being reliable was not a character trait he possessed. Step by step, the web is tightly woven until the victim can no longer escape. And then the sexual abuse follows. “He grabbed her, forced her.” Tamar speaks clearly. It is a disgrace, it is shameful, and it is foolishness. These are very serious words in Israel. With these words she invokes the law of God, which should have also been important to Amnon. It is a breaking with the whole law of God. What Amnon wanted to do was wicked. Tamar also appeals to Amnon's reasonableness: “we both will suffer from this.” But it was to no avail.

This event plays within the framework of Israel and its laws and practices of that time. In order to save their honour, Tamar suggests that Amnon takes her as his wife. It is not generally accepted practice for a brother and sister to engage in sexual relations or to marry each other thus, such relations still draw a degree of repugnance. There are modern laws against incest, though the practice is known. In that time marriages between brothers and sisters were accepted. However, Amnon used his power over his sister to commit rape. He had no desire or intention to marry her. He had no concern for the consequences of his action on her life even though she appealed on God's law to him. Sadly, in our time, an appeal to God's law may not necessarily prevent the perpetrator from carrying out acts of sexual abuse.

Wickedness and violence cannot be reasoned with when the perpetrator arrives at a state of obsession. When a perpetrator has craftily planned his or her attempt to carry out sexual abuse, a child or less powerful adult in his or her custody stands no chance of escape.

Amnon overpowered and raped Tamar. And after that he rejected her, hated her and had a total dislike for her. There is no love to be seen here. It is pure violence.

Sexual abuse is not wholly about sex but it is a crass abuse of power that one exercises over another. It is domination in action. It is a forceful and unwanted violation of another person's sacred space, one's body. The other is used as a thing. Whoever hears stories of victims always hears this chorus. One always sees the same patterns of abuse of power. Perpetrators are always searching

for vulnerable people, girls and boys, men and women who are not adequately protected and are lured into their net under false pretences. What follows is very well known. Tamar, the victim tears her garment, mourning as if she was guilty. In a world of lies and manipulations everything becomes reversed. Amnon the trustworthy becomes untrustworthy and Tamar feels guilty and mourns for the life that is taken from her. Tamar utters no word in the story after her experience of rape. Her fate is to live in the house of her brother Absalom as a lonely one, withdrawn from society and damaged forever. Victims tend to retreat or remain silent in unjust states of shame and guilt.

Amnon, however, appears to go off freely. His father David does not seem to do anything. Yet, this inaction silently supported Amnon's position. Yes, David did get angry when he heard what had taken place, but he did not physically do anything about it. Even though God's laws were transgressed, and David's daughter raped, spiritually and severely damaged, David appeared to remain passive. After his adulterous actions with Bathsheba he had reduced his capacity to correct his errant son. Clearly his parenting skills came into question and he did a disservice to his children named in the story.

In this regard, one can see culturally what Absalom tried to do by offering poor consolation and advice to his sister in order to save the honor of the family (2 Samuel 13:20 kjv). "And Absalom her brother said unto her, hath Amnon thy brother been with thee? But hold now thy peace, my sister: he is thy brother regard not this thing. So Tamar remained desolate in her brother's house."

Although he may have thought he was helping his sister, in fact it was his brother who stood to benefit from this advice. These words had the effect of condemning his sister to a life of desolation.

Nonetheless he stood by her side in the manner that he understood. Absalom hated Amnon for what he had done to Tamar. Two years later, his hatred matured to the point that Absalom killed Amnon. During the following years, there is a complete destruction of David's royal house. A house divided against itself cannot stand. This is also true for a country; in the case of a church it is especially true. A church which does not uphold justice will eventually perish. Furthermore, whatever applied for Absalom and David applies today to most parents, churches, ministers, helpers and bystanders, namely an unwillingness to challenge, expose and effectively deal with sexual abuse. We all know it is there. According to the World Health Organization, a study conducted in 2011 estimates that 18 per cent of girls and eight per cent of boys worldwide have been victims of sexual abuse (World Health Organization, 2011, Sexual and Reproductive Health: Violence Against Women. <http://www.who.int/entity/reproductivehealth/.../>).

These estimates also suggest that the intensity of abuse varies from place to place and many cases are not reported. Most perpetrators are men. However, there are also women who often appear friendly, seemingly reliable and trustworthy people, but are involved in cases of sexual abuse. We also know that sexual abuse is as common in church as it is outside of the church.

The church is called to be the voice of God. In instances where there is sexual abuse what is needed is an acknowledgment of the

wrong which has been done to the victim. The church has to do justice to the wronged and give a voice to the silenced. Acknowledgment of the victim means that we unambiguously choose to stand by that victim and create a space where people are safe and heard. We ought to make it possible for persons who are abused to find help and, hopefully, healing.

Creating Safe Spaces in the Church

Some initial ways in which the church could become a safe space for victims of abuse are:

- Putting people ahead of doctrine or church politics
- Gaining knowledge of all forms of abuse
- Acknowledging the suffering of the abused
- Facilitating the recovery process for victims of abuse

Creating programmes of healing for the abusers

What is the requirement for a church to be a safe haven for victims? First of all, there must be an unrelenting quest for justice. The church has to show that it is committed to seeking justice for victims. Although called to forgiveness the church should follow the course of legal redress for the victim. The church should also offer ongoing counselling so that the victim/s may be able to return to the fullness of life.

Secondly, it must be clear that through sermons, catechisms, bible studies and articles in church magazines there is room and openness for sexual abuse to be discussed. Only if the church and the ministers explicitly offer recognition and understanding, is there a chance that these stories will be openly shared. The time of silence

is over. We must see the brokenness that is among us. There is still too little recognition for the many who suffer in silence, because ‘well-meaning bystanders’ say, ‘keep silent.’ That kind of stance only benefits perpetrators in an attempt to maintain the illusion that our families, churches and schools are safe.

Thirdly, it will be necessary to assess not only our sermons, but also our doctrines and beliefs as to whether they are a pure representation of the gospel. We will also have to consider whether it is a view that will offer salvation or harm to people who have been violated. If a message aggravates pain, then there is something wrong, however dogmatically it may be delivered, and however the congregation may receive the message.

In order to draw attention to the problem, preachers and church councils should be thoroughly informed about sexual abuse and its consequences and be undeterred by the manipulations of perpetrators. In that regard, it would be appropriate also for our churches to develop well-informed working groups on sexual abuse. These groups would assist in equipping church councils and ministers to address these matters. Further, the work of the groups could create policy documents to guide responses to cases of sexual abuse.

One does not plead for a witch hunt against people ‘crossing the border.’ In the name of all those who are injured one asks for a church to prevail over justice, truth and love, a church where stories of pain and injustice are really heard, a church where nothing is covered and nothing revenged, where children are protected, victims are restored and perpetrators are counselled but brought to justice.

One asks for a church of Jesus Christ, which, unlike Amnon, honours trustworthiness and unlike Absalom offers peace and justice. One asks for nothing more than a church where all aspects of God's Kingdom will be visible.

The IED Context

Miguel Angel Cancu and Betania Figueroa

Introduction

The Dominican Evangelical Church (IED) was started in 1922 and comprises three denominations: the United Brethren, Moravian and Methodist (Wesleyan, African & United). It arose from the missionary project of the Board for Christian Service in Santo Domingo.

In 1999 Rev. Ramon Figueroa represented the IED at the CANACOM Council meeting in Georgetown, Guyana. The agreement to accept our church into membership was reached at that meeting.

Congregations are grouped into what we call circuits or regions. The circuits are the territorial units where the church has organized its work. Each circuit is presided over by a pastor or elder. Currently the church has six regions:

1. Central Region (12 churches organized and seven chapels)
2. South Central Region (six organized churches and five chapels)
3. Deep South Region (11 organized churches and eight chapels)
4. East Region (seven organized churches and six chapels)
5. North Region (six organized churches and 14 chapels)
6. Northeast Region (three organized churches and 13 chapels)

The IED is comprised of 45 organized churches and 54 chapels to serve the membership of 10,473. The laity is organized into associations which are identified by the acronyms according to the group: Youth Association of the Dominican Evangelical Church, AJIED; Women's Association of the Evangelical Christian Church, AMIED; and Association of Men of the Dominican Evangelical Church, ASOHIED, formed recently. These associations develop programmes and projects designed for the development and training of members for a lifetime of service and relationship with God.

Working in Partnerships

Over the years, the IED has been committed to the involvement in projects in partnership with groups in the community beyond the walls of the church. It was from this background that we prayerfully and happily accepted membership in CANACOM. Our style of working fitted in quite neatly with CANACOM's approach to mission.

Working with CANACOM has been a joy because we still enjoy the freedom of independence to pursue our internal mission mandates while being invited to actively participate in CANACOM's mission priorities. Thus, between the years 1999 and 2015 we have had the opportunity to benefit directly from mission empowerment grants from CANACOM which have strengthened the work of our church in the Dominican Republic in the areas of:

- Theological education

- Continuing education programmes in local schools
- Healthcare
- The production of a set of eight educational booklets

[These booklets deal with different issues in the life of the church, such as: Synthesis of the History of the Dominican Evangelical Church, and How to be an Evangelical Dominican Republic, The Declaration of Faith. They have contributed to the formation of the new believers who are given a copy after receiving the classes of aspiring members who are taught by pastors.]

- Assisting in retrofitting churches and homes damaged by earthquake
- Contributing to the rescuing of street children and gang members who lacked stability
- Vacation bible activity

[The summer school programme is directed to the communities surrounding the local churches. Home visits are made for the sharing of the gospel and bible literature is distributed.]

- Training women agents of peace

Gender and Violence

Gender based violence is a problem in the Dominican Republic. This is well documented, for example, by the government and NGOs such as the International Planned Parenthood Federation/Western Hemisphere Region. A number of responses have been made to this sad situation. Legislation has been passed and programmes have been established to take care of victims.

Training in prevention techniques is also in place. The IED has been contributing to training in strategies to prevent violence and also to respond to the effects.

The interventions described below have been sponsored by CANACOM.

Gender and Violence Workshop

During the period March 6 to 9, 2014, a workshop was conducted under the direction of Rev. Izett Samá Hernández and it enabled the church to look at gender and violence and to learn ways in which this bad practice could be prevented and challenged. Participants also learnt ways to recovery which could be of benefit to survivors. The objectives were:

- Raising awareness of the issue of gender and violence in the context of the Dominican Republic.
- Sharing experiences regarding the work carried out by our churches on the subject of gender and violence.
- Drafting an action plan for work in our churches regarding violence.
- Creating liturgical and educational resources to address the issue of gender violence in our churches.

Participants

Twenty-eight (28) persons participated, comprising 14 women and 14 men. There were eight (8) pastors and 20 laity (leaders of

women's associations, men and youth; three [3] of the participants were members of the Presbyterian-Reformed Church in Cuba, 1 from the Presbyterian Church of the United States and 24 of the Dominican Evangelical Church).

Outcome

A Plan of action against violence in the Dominican Evangelical Church and the Presbyterian-Reformed Church in Cuba.

Future Actions

It was agreed that the lessons learnt in the workshop should be shared with a wider cross section of communities. Several approaches were designed for implementation:

1. Awareness raising workshops in the communities (Family Pastoral and Christian Education) DEPRMI
2. Information campaigns (local family pastoral committees in local churches)
 - a. Production and distribution of newsletters with information on government policies on the subject of gender and violence.
 - b. Advise persons of the availability and location/s within
 - churches
 - NGOs
 - government agencies
 - c. The publications committee would be requested to dedicate articles on this topic in the church magazines.

Healing Actions

Victims/survivors are affected psychologically, spiritually, socially. Normally they are also in need of legal advice. It was agreed to:

1. Create support groups to help those who have been violated
2. Make available safe spaces for the families of the women who are violated (daughters and sons, parents and other relatives)

Liturgical Response

The Church is committed to the teaching that we ought to cast our cares on the LORD and he will sustain us (Psalm 55:22a). It was agreed at the workshop that the church would create two liturgies which address the matter of gender based violence. These would be introduced into the lives of the entire church.

Designs for gender based violence workshop

Arising from the workshop two templates have been produced for use in the churches and wider community.

Final recommendations

1. The issue of gender and violence is a priority within our context, so we should continue to support opportunities for reflection on this topic.
2. As part of this event, an action plan was prepared to be carried out by the participating churches. It was suggested

that a meeting should be held within the year to evaluate the development and results of the action plan. The intention is to also to envision new lines of action.

3. The liturgies and workshop designs that were produced should be published and distributed among member churches.

Additionally, the documents would need to be translated into the necessary languages.

Women Agents of Peace Programme

In 2015 with the support of CANACOM the Association of Women of the Churches of the Central Region, designed a programme called Women Agents of Peace. In our country, the Dominican Republic, there is a very high level of intra-family violence. This programme was a response to that reality. The training was aimed at teaching women ways of protecting themselves. It also provided ways of responding or advising victims of violence.

Fifteen (15) women from ten (10) congregations were trained. The agreement at the end of the programme was that the trained women would return to their communities and churches and share with victims of violence the techniques of prevention and of response. Crucially, information was shared regarding the formally instituted departments which can offer protection and support.

One of the unexpected results of this initiative was the discovery that some female members of the church who participated

in the workshops had also been victims of sexual and physical abuse.

The participants found the training to be educational, informative and somewhat therapeutic. Their commitment to working with other women in the churches and communities has been renewed for some whilst kindled for others. Resulting from the training was the emergence of new leaders in the local churches. Women developed and honed new skills. They all learnt new interventions which they can make on behalf of their church.

Christian Education

Christian education is an important part of the life of the church. The Office of Christian Education which had been closed for many years has now been reopened. It is from this office the educational programs of the church are drawn. There has always been a concern about doctrinal training as people prepare for church membership. The publication of simple literature has allowed us to move toward achieving this purpose.

For the population that does not usually attend church, we offer a space where children receive healthy recreation, guidance on good behavior and the message of Christ for their lives.

A summer camp is one of the annual activities traditionally organized in churches. Its purpose is the training, recreation and development of the spiritual life of the members of the church. These are celebrated for the different age groups such as children and adolescents, as well as the laity organized in their different

associations (Women, Youth and Men). We have a physical space where every summer, activities are carried out.

The publication of training materials that we have been developing over the last two years has made the life of local churches more dynamic. Congregations strive to have books, use them, and value the fact that they are a production of the church itself. Thanks to the support of the United Methodist Church of the United States through the missionary Ardell Louisa Graner we have been able to produce these teaching materials especially for boys and girls.

The lessons are oriented in the search to develop in children an active and participative attitude that allows them to know and have a relationship with our Lord Jesus Christ. Missionary Ester Kim of the Presbyterian Church of Korea, who chairs the commission of production of Didactic Materials, can participate in the publication of Sunday School materials with high quality, since they are printed in Korea.

This has made us see the need to develop training programs for the teachers of the different Bible Schools. The training is geared toward helping the teachers to develop their lessons efficiently.

Service / Social Action

Through this area of work, the church demonstrates our love and compassion for people whether they are within the church or not. We offer different services such as health, education, and guidance in coping with different issues of social life in the country. In a practical way we assist people during the rainy and cyclone

seasons or other natural disasters. This is a testament that as a church we are looking to cater to the holistic needs of persons.

Our Health Department has operated for more than 16 years. Pastor the Rdo. Dr. Leopoldo Reyes Nin is the person in charge of this aspect of mission. As part of its work, it coordinates health promoting activities, giving talks in the rural communities of the Southern Region, parts of our country which are most impoverished. In 2016, a total of 3,265 health promotion talks were held. The department coordinates the actions of the consultancies that work in the South Region. Also significant is the work carried out in coordination with members who are doctors and nurses. Some come from the United States of America as volunteers on mission, in collaboration with the Dominican Republic's Ministry of Health and the Dr. Jaime Mota Regional University Hospital. The medical operations are organized to care for persons with low income and a lack of resources.

A total of 1,502 persons accessed medical services through our Health Clinic in 2016. An additional 172 general surgeries were performed. Had it not been for the church's intervention, these families would not have been given a chance at restorative health care.

Another proposal that the church is developing in the regions is Community Health Evangelism. This proposal is carried out with the Rda. Jo Ella Holman who is the Regional Liaison for the Caribbean of the Presbyterian Church USA. This proposal is allowing the church to have an increasingly closer approach to the problems of the community. At the same time, it increases the

capability of the leadership accompanying the people on the journey both to physical health and growth in the Christian faith. This proposal is developed in coordination with three important areas of the church – social action, evangelism and the women’s association.

The Solar Furnace Project

The Solar Furnace Project is carried out with the support of missionary couple Gordon and Louisa Graner of the United Methodist Church. It involves the provision of a solar furnace to families from the poorest and most marginalized areas at a low cost. To achieve this, meetings are organized in the regions where the church operates.

At each meeting the beneficiaries are trained on how to use the oven and are given a brochure explaining the benefits of the furnace and how to use it. They are also offered simple recipes on how to prepare food and how to care for the oven. The furnace is an alternative to propane gas which is expensive and to charcoal that pollutes and damages the environment and destroys forests

Laic Education

Education is one of the areas of great importance in church life. Since the foundation of our church we have been busy providing this service to Dominicans. Today we have 18 educational centres; four (4) of them are referred to as ‘national’ because they are directed from the Executive Committee and by the Board of Secular Education. This ensures that schools comply with the regulations

and standards of the Ministry of Education, which is the institution of the Government that regulates education at the national level.

There are 13 parish schools and they are under the direction of the local churches where they are located. Our school populations are comprised mainly of students of poor economic means. Most of our churches were originally established in these areas. The total number of students is 4,000 children including girls and adolescents of the levels Initial, Basic and Middle grades, with some schools offering technical training.

We are grateful to God for having allowed us the opportunity to impact the lives of the population which He has entrusted into our care. Our partnership with CANACOM has been such a blessing and we look forward to more ways of working together in the future.

Turning the World Upside Down – Onesimus, Philemon and Partnership-in-Mission in the 21st Century

Jo Ella Holman

Introduction

There are moments in mission when we begin to glimpse another way of seeing the world, or when we are dumbstruck by a different perspective, or when we are so enriched by another's story that we are not the same afterwards. Of course, those experiences only occur when we listen deeply, when we pay attention, when we put our own opinions in a box on the shelf until another can share her world or his insight – and be changed by it.

One of the joys of partnership-in-mission, of accompanying one another as Christian people in our different contexts is just such 'aha' moments when we transcend our own culturally-limited understandings and enter into the experience and understanding of our brother or sister. I have experienced and continue to experience this awakening within the context of the Caribbean and North America in the sharing of biblical and theological interpretation. An example of one such revelation – that continues to be very timely in today's world – has come through a Caribbean interpretation of the New Testament letter to Philemon.

Now, when was the last time you heard a sermon or a Sunday school lesson on Paul's letter to Philemon? If your experience is like

mine growing up in the church, you may *never* have heard from this text. But, it is a very important text in the life of some of our sister churches in the Caribbean. For many Caribbean theologians and preachers, especially in Jamaica, this is a seminal text for examining their own experience as descendants of slaves, as former colonial subjects, and as present-day citizens of the global south. So, let us look together at this letter.

The Biblical Context and Historical Interpretation

Paul writes from his jail cell, probably in Ephesus, to Philemon, a convert and “brother” to Paul and prominent in the church at Colossae. The text of this letter is about slavery and enslavement, which in Paul’s day could include enslavement of any peoples brought into the Roman Empire; therefore, there is an implicit connection in the text with economic, political, and military oppression of whole ‘nations’ (peoples) via the Roman Empire and the enslavement of individuals from the absorbed territories.

The slaves may or may not have been of different races or ethnicities from the Romans, but in that day the social constructs of ‘race’ and ‘ethnicity’ tended more toward the peoples of the different city-states and territories of the time, rather than ‘race’ as we understand it today. Also, many of the slaves of that era were ‘debt’ slaves – people who sold themselves or were sold into slavery because they had fallen into debt and could not free themselves in any other way. Those who were wealthy enough could ‘purchase’ individuals who were then used for their labour, according to the master’s needs and the slaves’ skills.

Paul had likely spent time in Philemon's household and may have met Onesimus the slave while there. Some scholars think that Philemon may have sent Onesimus to Paul to care for him, bringing him food, clothing and other necessities while he was imprisoned. We do not know for sure how Onesimus came to be with Paul, but in his letter, Paul explains why and under what terms he is sending Onesimus back to Philemon.

Traditional readings of this letter by the Church have encouraged the view that Paul was not against slavery, but was interested in maintaining the order of society. Indeed, in the 5th century, the Church wanted to assure the Roman Empire that Christianity was not a threat. For example, St. John Chrysostom inferred from the letter that Onesimus was a 'bad slave' and that Paul was trying to bring order in sending him back to Philemon. From then through the 1800s, the Church's traditional interpretation was that Christianity *makes bad slaves good* and that the laws of the land must be obeyed. Such was its use in the era of slavery in the southern states of the United States of America.

But how is this letter read by some Caribbean Christians? Let's try to look at it through their eyes and experience.

The Caribbean Context

The populations of the Caribbean Islands are largely descendants of African people brought to the region into a life of Chattel slavery by the British, French, Spanish and Dutch colonizers and slave traders as they competed for supremacy of Empire in the Western hemisphere. The indigenous peoples of the Caribbean were

largely exterminated by disease, overwork, torture, and suicide. The first encounter of the indigenous people of the islands with Christian ‘mission’ – the collaboration between the Spanish Empire and the Church – ultimately resulted in their genocide. As early as 1511, a few Christians were raising their voices against the abuse of the indigenous peoples; Friar Antonio de Montesinos and Bartolomé de las Casas are examples of such Christians. But, no such clear voice was raised on behalf of the thousands of Africans brought to these shores as slaves. Even after the abolition of slavery, subsequent generations from Europe and, later, from the United States have continued efforts at economic and political control of the now-independent nations. This has included military occupation. Thus, the history of bodily slavery in the Caribbean, as in Paul’s day, has been intimately connected to its brother in empire, economic, political and sometimes military domination.

However, our Caribbean brothers and sisters, coming from this legacy of slavery, have found great hope in their reading of this letter to Philemon.

A Jamaican Reading

In the traditional readings of Paul’s letter to Philemon, Onesimus, the runaway slave is seen as voiceless and powerless. However, in the Caribbean reading and reflection, an emancipatory reading of it emerges that is in two parts. First, Onesimus, the slave, is seen, not as a ‘victim’ but as the protagonist, the subject of this story, the initiator of action. Rev. Dr. Burchell Taylor of Jamaica writes that “victims of oppression and injustice who seem to be

voiceless and powerless are, nevertheless, often initiators and catalysts of powerful liberating influences and impulses.”¹ In the case of Onesimus, his “yearning for freedom from slavery met with the liberating experience of the gospel and created an event of personal liberation with possibilities of much wider implications.” Onesimus found in the gospel, liberation of his mind and spirit. He is not only bodily enslaved, the property of others, but his mind is also enslaved. This is an important point for Caribbean theologians. Freedom from bondage begins with the spirit and the mind of the one enslaved. There is a need, as Paul says elsewhere, for “being transformed by the renewing of our minds” (Rm. 12:2). There is a mentality associated with slavery that is nurtured from birth by society and sometimes even by one’s own family.

Think of your own experience and examples of situations in which enslavement of mind and spirit can occur. When it does occur, there exists a distortion in a person’s view of him- or herself as a person created in the image of God, deserving of dignity, respect and love. I think of those addicted to drugs or gambling; those in prison and those living in abject poverty. Perhaps one of the greatest sources of enslavement in some cultures, including my own U.S. culture, is consumerism: the addiction to the latest technology, fashion or fad.

I think of experiences I had while still living near where I grew up in the United States, of women who were living in situations of domestic violence. For a time, my home was a temporary ‘safe house’ for women and children who were seeking to escape a cycle of violence and abuse in their homes. In talking with these and other

women in similar situations, it became very clear that until each woman was able to see her own mental and emotional ‘enslavement’ she would not be able to break out of the cycle of violence. This person, created in the image of God, was sometimes so crippled in spirit that she could believe that she ‘deserved’ the abuse because something was fundamentally wrong with her for such treatment to be inflicted upon her. Also, too often the gospel message of freedom and emancipation became the cudgel used to keep her in a violent state of domination.

In the Caribbean, as in many other places, the impact of racism on the sense of self and self-worth can be extremely damaging. In the Dominican Republic, where I now live, one would think that everyone is white – that is, if you only look at the political billboards or photos in the business or society pages of the newspaper. Cuba, which has maintained rhetoric of equality within their society since the Cuban revolution, has only in recent years begun to talk somewhat openly about race and racial discrimination and disparagement in society and in the Church. Darker skin colour, even in lands where a mixture of races is the norm, often means ‘lesser’, and can translate into both self-loathing and societal discrimination.

But, in Onesimus we have an example of one whose mind and spirit have been set free. He is able, in light of the gospel message, to see himself as the human being he is, created in the image of God, beloved. In this new self-knowledge, he is able to become the subject of his own life story. This is a point that Jamaican

theologians emphasize and it is a message of hope to all those who feel trapped, damaged, or victimized by others.

And the second part of a Caribbean reading of this letter is that Paul has an important role in this transaction, in this transformation as a “facilitator of liberation.” Paul, in this regard, becomes a model for all who would seek to stand in solidarity, to be allies with those enslaved by the many forces at work in our world.

Paul’s use of language is particularly important. Paul calls Onesimus “my child,” (v. 10); “beloved brother,” (v. 16); and the “heart of the apostle,” (v. 12) terms that convey the new relationship in Christ that existed between this slave and Paul. For someone who had been demeaned in the role of a slave to be “...seen and referred to and accepted in such new ways meant liberating influences were at work,” as Dr. Taylor states.²

Dr. Taylor also talks about the role of language in freedom from bondage: “Language can be both oppressive and liberating” and the “language of relational significance is especially important” (p. 53). Paul’s language affirms Onesimus’ new status, but he goes on to extend the process even further, to Philemon and to the church community. As Paul writes in Galatians, “In Christ, there is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus (Gal. 3:28).

Paul calls slave-owner, Philemon, and the whole church community to see and respond to Onesimus in a new way so that they are also set free. This is the other side of the slavery dynamic.

Not only is the ‘slave’ enslaved, but those who hold others in slavery are also enslaved.

Those who once held Onesimus as a slave, with all his attendant disadvantages and with all the privileges it represented for them with an easy conscience, must now know the sense of freedom that comes with relating to him properly as a human being of equal dignity – one like themselves (p. 54).

Onesimus as initiator of action and Paul as facilitator of liberation, in solidarity with Onesimus, each played their important roles in the liberating process.

Onesimus, Philemon and Partnership-in-Mission

Rev. Dr. Maitland Evans, former General Secretary of the United Church of Jamaica and the Cayman Islands, applies this concept of the two-sides of slavery to partnerships-in-mission.³ Rev. Evans describes the contemporary context as one that continues to hold *us all* in a state of slavery, in this same dynamic that bound Onesimus and Philemon and that needs the gospel’s liberating action.

He describes the vision of partnership-in-mission as one in which “...men and women from different walks of life, from different backgrounds and circumstances can indeed break down, climb over, or even go under the walls of hostility bequeathed to us as a legacy of history and, in so doing, find common cause in God’s mission of justice and peace in the world.” It is a vision that claims that mission is ultimately the work of the Triune God for the sake of the world and that we are privileged to participate in this work.

“Mission has its origin in the heart of God. God is the fountain of sending love.” We, as Church, are invited and, yes, called to participate together – with those who are like us and those who are very different from ourselves – together with God. That is the partnership. But how, Rev. Evans goes on to ask, does this vision of partnership-in-mission “...speak a relevant and responsible word to the world that we share?”

Speaking a word to the world, together

The churches and people of the global south are burdened by an economic stranglehold that draws the lifeblood from the people, sending thousands each year into diaspora, many of them to the U.S. and others to Europe, in search of economic opportunity. The appetite and enslavement to drugs in the Global North fuels the trade in drugs across international borders that has been accompanied by conflict in much of the Caribbean, Central America and Mexico.

Partnership must recognize these and other global realities at work. “Part of the struggle of how we work together as partners is very deeply embedded in all of the imagery in the transaction between Onesimus and Philemon,” says Rev. Evans. “Onesimus has the mindset, mentality and attitude of a slave. And Philemon has the mindset, mentality and attitude of a slave owner. And Paul, the missionary, is in horizontal counsel.” The dynamics of their transaction are critically important: “The real test of our capacity for partnership-in-mission,” says Rev. Evans, is our ability to *enter into qualitatively different kinds of relationship*, [my emphasis] by walking a mile in the shoes of a slave; and seeing how the slave

begins to perceive what it means to be the slave owner; and understanding how Paul, as he spits justice, as he engages in horizontal counsel, brings about a different understanding and relationship between Onesimus and Philemon. The real measurement of mission is deeply rooted in the quality of the relationships we are able to develop and that mean a radical dislocation in our thinking, our feeling, and our behaviour. It is not easy and we cannot do it alone. We need each other.

The liberating message of the gospel frees us from our own perceptions of ourselves and others; it frees us to relate to each other as human beings created in the image of God and to Christians around the world as brothers and sisters in Christ. This is a joyous message for all, for it gives us a new identity, just as Onesimus claimed a new identity in Christ. It challenges us toward justice and freedom, responding in solidarity with others, and enables us to see life and the world through new eyes.

Sometimes in our joint mission encounters we witness the happiness and joy of Christians in a situation of great poverty. Someone may ask, “How can they be so happy when they have nothing?” However, in being freed from our own limited vision, we may redefine their “nothing” as the depth of their “something”: life, hope, patience, resilience, the capacity to endure as well as to struggle, to know suffering, to know the pathway to the opening of new doors and new opportunities (Evans, p. 17). As we make these new friends, we may find the courage to risk confronting the powers and circumstances that hold us and them in bondage, in the name of

love and of justice (Taylor, pp. 54-55), in the name of the One who freed us all.

What amazing insights on this passage of scripture from our Caribbean friends who open up this letter in a way that is life-giving; that is truly good news. Also, how valuable they are for our journey with each other in God's mission. These are gifts we give and receive as we seek to partner with each other and with God: moments of recognition and insight; moments of deep contrition; and moments of joy that can propel us forward, out into the world with shared vision and the strength to our joint witness to the world.

“Turning the world upside down”

In the 21st century that is already quickly approaching its quarter-century mark, the Spirit is moving in mighty ways. We can see it in so many areas of life and society globally. There is the movement worldwide to end sexual harassment, sexual abuse and other forms of violent domination that keep women enslaved, mentally and bodily, as well as enslaving the men who perpetrate it. The “me, too” movement of women publicly telling their stories is a powerful example of this call and struggle toward emancipation.

There is the movement worldwide toward recognizing the historical trauma of slavery, toward combating the ongoing bodily slavery that still exists and is accelerating through human trafficking in its many forms. The many countries experiencing war, internal displacement and migration, economic and environmental devastation increase daily and point to just how far we are from the justice and love that God desires for all humanity and for creation,

itself. And people are speaking up and out, organizing locally, nationally and internationally to struggle against the death-dealing forces that perpetuate this violence and death.

There is the movement toward recognizing ‘white privilege’ in societies around the world – privilege that shows itself in the structures of our societies and functions to maintain the *status quo*, even though millions of people are harmed and destroyed by it. Sometimes ‘privilege’ takes the form of one ethnicity over another. ‘Showing up for Racial Justice,’ ‘Black Lives Matter’ and many other groups are springing up in the USA and in other countries with similar concerns to address a multitude of disparities based on race. Some of these are faith-based groups and many are not.

Many groups that counter these movements are also springing up worldwide toward maintaining things as they are – or as they were. It is shaping up to be a struggle of cosmic proportions that will form the world for the rest of this century.

However, those who have been marginalized in societies around the globe and those who stand with them are “turning the world upside down” (Acts 17) in our time. The liberating, emancipatory freedom evident in the transaction between Onesimus and Philemon is demonstrated in the messages and in the non-violent means to work together for peace and justice that many of these latest movements reflect.

History has repeatedly shown that the church is often among the last to join with these liberating movements and has, countless times, interpreted scripture to maintain the established order of things. Let us not be caught on the wrong side of history again. As

we continue our partnership-in-mission through CANACOM and through many other ecumenical bodies both, locally and globally, may we hear the story of Onesimus and Philemon afresh as our Caribbean friends have opened it for us. May we hear the gospel, the good news that shall be for all people, not only in the eternity of Heaven, but in the reign of God on earth as it is in Heaven.

As partners-in-mission we help each other to see more clearly, to hear more rightly, to act more faithfully in light of the gospel of Jesus Christ. As in Paul's day, so should it be in the here and now. This is our moment.

Importance of the Document "Together Towards Life" for Latin America and the Caribbean and Particularly for Cuba

Ofelia Ortega

Introduction

The World Council of Churches (WCC) brings together 345 Protestant, Orthodox, Anglican and other churches representing more than 560 million Christians in 110 countries and works cooperatively with the Roman Catholic Church.

Since the integration of the International Missionary Council (IMC) and WCC in New Delhi, 1961, there has been only one official WCC position on mission and evangelism under the leadership of Dr. Emilio Castro, from Latin America.

We would like to highlight the following distinctive perspectives on the document *Together Towards Life: Mission and Evangelism in Changing Landscapes*:

1. The new ecumenical affirmation focuses on the mission of the Holy Spirit (Missio Spiritus) as its theological framework within the Trinitarian understanding of mission (Missio Dei).
2. The statement affirms that the goal of mission is affirming life in all its fullness.

3. Creation and spirituality are the heart of mission. In this statement, God's mission is understood beyond anthropocentric goals. God's mission is not only for the salvation of humanity alone but includes the earth and the whole creation.
4. The new affirmation is an ecumenical conviction. Compared to the 1982 text, in addition to Protestant thinking about mission, Orthodox, Pentecostal, and Roman Catholic mission understandings are strongly reinforced. The new landscapes of world Christianity are highlighted with the concepts of mission from the margins, issues of migration and economic globalization.

The new statement strongly affirms a renewed commitment to evangelism in humility and respect. Sharing the news of Jesus Christ is an ultimate concern of mission. The text examines how to communicate the gospel in an individualized, secularized and materialized contemporary world.

As the Latin American biblical scholar, Néstor Míguez affirmed: “‘Together Towards Life’ (TTL) has given us, on a global scale, the primary message and hermeneutic for mission and evangelism for our time, God is for life, and not just survival, but the abundant fullness of life. It is a holistic reading of the good news of God in Christ Jesus (Néstor Míguez, “Missional Formation for Transforming Discipleship,” paper presented in the 2nd WCC-CWME Consultation on Missional Formation, Sept. 2016, Matanzas, Cuba).

We would like to highlight some of the most important perspectives of the Document “Together Towards Life” for Latin America and Cuba.

1. In this document the proper best way of defining the *Missio Dei* is the Triune God’s enduring invitation to “cross frontiers,” to “build bridges,” resulting in the church participating responsibly in history, culture, in people’s lives, and in the created world, in which God constantly dwells.

This has been a very important commitment of the Latin American Churches during the last decades, to try to find peace, unity, and integration among our countries and people. The affirmation approved by CELAC (Community of Latin America and Caribbean States) in January 2014 in Havana, declaring that Latin America is a “Zone of Peace,” and the dialogue for more than four years in Cuba to try to end the terrible war and death situation in Colombia is a sign of hope in the world today.

For Cuba, suffering for more than 50 years the USA embargo, we were crossing frontiers and building bridges with the support and caring love of friends and churches here in the States and Canada and in many other countries and churches in the South, including not only Latin America and the Caribbean but an incredible understanding of our situation from Africa and ASIA. The millions of bibles that

we are receiving today are coming mainly from the churches in South Korea. This is a vital part of the mission of the churches in Latin America, Caribbean broadly and Cuba.

2. A very important key concept within the TTL Document is “mission at the margins” of society. But, just, where are those margins within the particular landscape that our pastors and lay leaders serve? Moreover, what types of skills are needed by these church members and leaders to do the mission at these margins? We need to enter to analyse the pedagogical concept of mission today. This was central to our experience in the two Seminars between the Evangelical Theological Seminary in Cuba and the Theological Seminary of the Presbyterian Church in Louisville, Kentucky.

We always remember the words of Toyohiko Kagawa on his interpretation of the parable of the prodigal son where he affirms that God is always running from the centre to the periphery. For more than three decades, in Cuba we were the remnants of a church with very few people in the pews of our local congregations. Now, since the end of the eighties until the time of writing, 2017, we have more than 3000 to 5000 house churches and the missionary extension is now along the island.

3. A sentence in section 58, page 12 of the Document has attracted our attention: “Mission is not a project of church growth, but the church’s project to be an incarnation of God’s salvation in the world, do we have today incarnational mission models that inspired us? Recently we celebrated in Havana 30 years of work of the Martin Luther King Center associate to the “Ebenezer” Baptist Church. In 30 years of work, this church together with the Center transformed the community where they are situated with a programme of popular education and a network of community leaders with deep social concerns and a living testimony of incarnational faith. Art, music and popular reading of the bible related to the experience and cultural contextual situation of the neighborhood produced the transformation.

Some years ago, the Cuban government approved that pastors and lay leaders could visit officially prisons for spiritual support. A Baptist pastor, Francisco Rodés organized a movement of voluntary chaplains to respond to this Mission call. Now, there are more than 300 Christian leaders (women and men) who receive adequate formation from joining the movement but is a different kind of visit, not only for evangelistic purposes but to work in a very interesting pedagogical way for the change and transformation of the people in prison and for the reincorporation of many of them to the society. They are

developing a completely different methodological approach. Recently, Francisco Rodés and other Christian leaders were called by the military services to receive the gratitude for the radical changes that they achieved in the lives of the people in prison. These are models of incarnational mission.

4. Our definition of the *Missio Dei* must always be that God sends us out to the road into a road with two-way traffic. This is a mission that is not anthropocentric but biocentric. It is important to emphasize the theology of creation because we have been much affected by a constant emphasis being placed on a theology of sin and redemption. Several communities in Africa, Asia, Pacific, Latin America and the Caribbean have beautiful concepts that describe the good transforming life we are talking about because many of these communities are still living from and in an understanding of good and transforming life for all living things, the Earth and beyond. UBUNTU from Africa is an expression of human relations lived in the community and in harmony with the whole creation (African anthropology and world view lived in community); there is no separation between culture and religion.

In this world view, everyday things are an experience of the sacred. SANGSAENG is an ancient concept of Asia, “of a sharing community and economy, which allows them to flourish together.” In Latin America, SUMAK KAWSAY is

a concept that comes out of the world view of the indigenous peoples in Latin America about creation. It is an expression and praxis originating from the Quechua language of the Andes. SUMAK means fullness and KAWSAY life; altogether meaning 'well-being', 'good living' or integral quality of life 'for all'. SUMAK KAWSAY is both, tradition and realization in a going project pointing to a cosmic community. This community is built on the principles of diversity, reciprocity, solidarity and equality. In regions other than Africa, Asia, and Latin America, there must be concepts equivalent to these, which need to be explored together.

5. The TTL document challenges us with the concept of 'radical hospitality' (para. 47, p. 10) How we could practice it today with the present situation of migrants and refugees? Is this a mandate from God today for our nations and communities? Today, *Missio Dei* demands the call of hospitality. As Christians, how should we respond to God's grace and generosity? By opening ourselves to the others, we can find God in a new way (Heb. 13:2). Our willingness to accept the other in their otherness is the mark of true hospitality. In recent documents of the Lutheran World Federation, there is a very significant change of the word hospitality. The word that is used is CONVIVIALITY that has a better meaning to interpret the art and practice of living together. Our faith in the Triune God, the God of

diversity and unity, the God of Creation, who gives fulfilment, feeds and sustains us what helps us to be hospitable and open towards everybody. We have been given the generous hospitality of God's love. We cannot act differently.

6. God's Spirit can be found in all cultures that affirm life. We acknowledge that there are an inherent value and wisdom in diverse life-giving spiritualities. Therefore, authentic mission makes the other a partner in, not an object of the mission. Locally and globally, Christians must engage with people of other religions and cultures building societies of love, peace, and justice. The current religious pluralism, also called the interfaith context demands a dialogue of religions, not just to get doctrinal agreements or to establish a common form of worship, but also to discover the plurality in which God is manifest in history, the plurality of ways of salvation, the plurality of humankind to these manifestations.

Our experiences in Cuba have been included in the programme of Theological Education at the Evangelical Seminary of Theology in Matanzas, a course of Sciences of Religion in Havana, which at present has 120 students from various religions (there are eight religions in Cuba and a Platform of Cuban Religions for Peace) as well as agnostic students and others with no religious attachment of any

kind. When Christian awareness is open to global awareness, a new type of sustainable theology can emerge. This new theology requires a new kind of theologian men and women, with a new type of multi-dimensional, trans-cultural and trans-religious awareness.

7. The WCC Document includes a very important aspect of the development of missiological thrusts – mission arising out of the local communities, and the need to recognize the wisdom of the local population. Local congregations are frontiers and primary agents of mission.

Evangelism is grounded in the life of the local church where worship (Leiturgia) is inextricably linked to witness (Martyria), service (Diakonia) and fellowship (Koinonia). (II Corinthians, chapters 8 and 9).

Recently, in the most difficult economic period of Cuba (the so-called “special period” that began in the nineties), the National Association of Psychology organized a survey in Havana with the question, “How could you survive in this difficult social and economic situation?” Members of the association were surprised when the answer of many persons was the support, love, and hope of my local congregation.

These local spaces are the privileged place of the *Missio Dei* actions. The TTL Document included a pneumatological focus on Christian mission. We loved this affirmation because in Cuba we believe in the subversive actions of the Holy Spirit that surprise us in incredible ways, opening doors for the churches in difficult situations, inspiring our imagination and creativity to renew our liturgies, and to develop new ways to do the mission and diaconal work of the churches for the well-being of the Cuban society.

We agreed with Néstor Míguez when he affirmed: “Coming to the present century, three major documents, representing different Christian traditions have brought again into considerations the centrality of mission for the theology and praxis of the Gospel faith. Together Towards Life (TTL) can be matched considering important differences and emphases, with the Pontifical Encyclical *Evangelii Gaudium* (EG) with his antecedent in the final document of the V CELAM meeting in Aparecida, Brazil, and the following Encyclical *LAUDATE Si* (LS) – and with the Cape Town Commitment (CTC) of the Lausanne Movement (Néstor Míguez, *Missional formation for transforming discipleship*, p. 2).

Some important convergences in these three documents

- Affirming life in all its fullness

- Economy and economic practice are always a matter of faith as they touch the very core of God's will for creation
- The need to proclaim Jesus the Messiah and the Reign of God
- The joy of the Gospel gives life
- Discipleship and evangelization are keywords for all three documents
- A pneumatological focus on Christian mission.
- Unity prevails over conflict. Ecumenism is an indispensable path to evangelization
- For the church, the option for the poor is primarily a theological category rather than a sociological one
- The mission is at the center and purpose of Christian existence
- The church in each context is called to serve (Diakonia)
- Interreligious dialogue is a necessary condition for peace in the world
- A new missionary paradigm is emerging to respond to the new era in the world and a new time in civilization
- Healing is also one of the Gifts of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 12:9, Acts 3). The mission should foster the full participation of people with disabilities and illnesses in the life of the church and society
- The mission involves deconstructing patriarchal ideologies, upholding the right to self-determination for indigenous

peoples, and challenging the social embeddings of racism and 'casteism'

The mission is holistic and integral because the Triune God has a mission of grace in relation with humanity and that mission is holistic and universal of salvation, restoration, liberation, healing, compassion, reconciliation. God's reign is that of life, love, justice and peace.

To bring this reflection to a close, we want to point out that perhaps this is not the worst epoch of humanity, but without a doubt, it is not the most brilliant. It is a time with its own difficulties, which are so particular they can't be resolved with simple answers or recipes drawn from the past. It is also, however, 'our epoch', that in which we have been called upon to live because God willed it to be so, and in the midst of this epoch – not on the edges, but in the midst – is where we are summoned to share the good news and to do the words of the gospel.

This prayer which was named Romero's Prayer in honour of Archbishop Arnulfo Romero, a Latin American martyr helps us to see that –

*We are prophets and prophetesses of a future that is not our own
We have to listen to the voice of God and the clamor of God's
people
We have to open our hearts to respond to those who suffer
To speak prophetic language to respond to those who suffer
The hands to work for the poor and the needy*

The mind to reflect on the good news of the Gospel

The will to respond to God's call

*The spirit to wait for God in prayer, and to intercede for the church
and the world.*

Adventure of a Lifetime

Karen Francis

Introduction

What did you dream about? What did you know in your gut that you wanted to do or become and so set yourself on a course to get there? This Generation Xer was not fixated on becoming a doctor, lawyer, nurse or teacher nor did I struggle to figure out why everyone else was so sure of their life's calling and I was not. I listened to others wax warm about their convictions and each one seemed reasonable to me. Oh yeah, I could become a nurse. That resolution was firm, until I was confronted by the reality of messing around with blood. Strike!

What about a teacher? My mother had been a teacher of 30+ years, and what a role model! But it required patience to deal with students of mathematics like myself who just would not get it. Guess what, patience was not my strongpoint. Strike! And eventually I gave up.

I wish I could say I emerged from a period of introspection and reflection with a deeply convicted philosophical position of finding my own path, dancing to my own drum, doing 'me' and proclaiming it with a defiant spirit of adventure and resistance. It would be a good story. It would also be a good story if it was a position born of an epiphany of epic proportions. But it wasn't. I encountered my calling over time as I yielded to God when opportunities were

presented and sometimes when I was chosen to participate and others were convinced more than I was that this was the path for me. So, was my involvement in mission a result of happenstance or the clear perception of others with which I simply went along? Not by a long shot. Tracing the path of my footsteps I can now see it was a matter of choice, but choice which had been groomed by my socialization, my nurture in the Christian faith and an incredibly wise God whose skilful hands at my back nudged me into places I would never have walked on my own. Along the journey I discovered what I liked, what I was good at, and what I needed to learn.

Discovering and Being Discovered: This Thing Called Mission

The first time I paid attention to the word ‘mission’ was while I was attending the University of the West Indies in Jamaica. During those years the University and Colleges Christian Fellowship (UCCF) played a significant role in my socialization and offered me an environment for Christian nurture. In particular it introduced a charismatic dimension to the more ‘traditional’ approach which had been my predominant experience of Christianity. In the new milieu, mission had an ‘s’ at the end and was essentially evangelism. The mission was evangelism. I was in awe of those leaders of UCCF who would fearlessly share the Gospel (witness) with students. We were schooled in starting conversations with the purpose of sharing that despite being a ‘good’ person, it is still possible to be lost because by nature we are sinners. This dissatisfies God.

The conversation would progress to convincing the hearer that he or she needed to accept the gift of salvation which would deal with their sin problem. Most importantly they would be helped to know what to do to become a Christian and hopefully, the hearer would be willing to pray the prayer of surrender and salvation.

It was not until my exposure to Council for World Mission (CWM) that I came to understand mission as the totality of God's engagement with human beings; an engagement to which God has called every human being, Christian or not. What an eye-opener! I read stories of people working in hospitals, working with a community to improve agricultural yield, befriending refugees and realized there were no boundaries to what mission looked like. But what would it be like to experience it? Then at an unexpected time God created an opportunity with Caribbean and North America Council for Mission (CANACOM) which was to provide some clarity for me.

Young Adults in Mission (YAM): Two Ways Cuba 1997

So as I am going, I am growing; growing in my understanding of mission. I discovered that mission is not so much about where you are as it is what you are doing. So it's possible to engage in mission in your own home space – one's own country, one's own community. Although mission is not defined by location but by purpose I find myself drawn to mission beyond the borders of my home country. In the course of my work with the United Church in Jamaica and the Cayman Islands (UCJCI) as Director of Communication I encountered CANACOM, and knew it to be one

of the ways in which UCJCI works collaboratively with churches in other countries. So here is one instance in which the choice did not begin with me.

UCJCI leadership selected me to work on the planning team for Young Adults in Mission (YAM) Work camp intended for Cuba in 1997. That experience of planning with a multi-location team was my first. This is now a very normal way of working in my present job. The planning team included colleagues from the Caribbean and North America. I had the privilege of working with Jet den Hollander, then Education in Mission (EIM) Secretary for CANACOM. I knew of her passion for mission through an earlier work encounter as she had sought to bring alive the history of the UCJCI through a mission game. Jet's creativity and penchant for detailed planning guided our planning group towards an incredible experience of three weeks in Cuba which launched me into an important dimension of mission encounters – going outside one's comfort zone.

We began in Havana, spent a weekend with families, and then moved to Santa Clara for one week on a campsite, participating in the building of a community centre. The final week was dedicated to reflection. We had Spanish classes, were introduced to the politics of Cuba and walked the streets of Havana. We ventured into the dollar stores from which Cubans were banned at the time, bought guava cheese from street merchants, saw locals collecting water from the water trucks and fired questions at our hosts about this place I had heard glorious (and somewhat scary) tales about. I saw a country which understood how to celebrate history and use

monuments to record and recall significant moments in the country's life – teaching points for the young. I learnt to respect local practices no matter how unfamiliar and uncomfortable they were to me. As a leader I had to counsel campers who struggled with the unfamiliar and learnt for myself how important it is to listen and understand instead of judging and discarding. Honestly, I spoke some home truths to myself before I counselled them. I understood how differently we regard education, skills and money and saw how easily we make assumptions about the unknown.

Canada 2000

My second encounter with the YAM Work camp was in a completely different setting – Canada in 2000. Thankfully it was only the planning meeting which took place in the dead of winter and this Caribbean woman understood what it felt like to have no feeling in the extremities.

Again, we knocked heads together, planning and deciding how best we could help young adults understand mission. I found a sister friend in a Canadian minister whose spirit connected so well with mine. Equally memorable were the encounters with those whose spirit 'neva tek' mine, as we say in Jamaica. Being part of a team meant finding a way to work together even when we disagreed. I learnt that poverty looks different depending on where in the world you are and was reminded not to judge what we do not understand. The mosquitoes of Tatamagouche in Nova Scotia couldn't hold a candle to the nimble Jamaican mosquitoes who would avoid the

most skilled hands set out to annihilate them. The mosquitoes at Tatamagouche were so big they could not escape.

In Halifax during our week with families I came face to face with my prejudices against the poor and my fear of encounter. I saw a previously regarded ‘drama princess’ who was described by some participants as a ‘PK (preacher’s kid) airhead’ because it was felt her areas of interest never went beyond make-up and fashion, take our small group in hand as we organized a clothes distribution centre into a Macy’s like department store. She took on the role of personal shopper as she helped homeless persons seeking jobs to get that right outfit to snag the job. I saw the squared shoulders of the young woman who entered embarrassed and left feeling she had benefitted from an expensive makeover. I saw my fellow YAM-er who had been stereotyped and dubbed useless in mission engender dignity in one who was also struggling with the label of uselessness in society. I heard our minister-mentor who counselled us against hiding in the kitchen during the breakfast programme but instead to take some of the food and go and sit with those we had fed. “Who? Me! Is he serious? Eat this food? He must be joking.” I was repulsed at the thought of eating food intended for the poor. Then I was ashamed. Ashamed to know that was how I saw people in need, as less than me. They were the subjects of my efforts to feel good about myself by serving the poor. As long as I didn’t have to look into their eyes I was good. Could they actually have the capacity to minister to me? In those moments I felt the gentle hand of the Holy Spirit moulding this lump of clay. Like Peter, I went away and wept bitterly.

I came to understand how a small chapel can have the reach of a cathedral. The church to which our small group was connected that week is one of those to which the bodies of those who died in the tragedy of the sinking of the Titanic were taken. This church so large in the history of the world occupied only a small corner of a huge building; most of it housing a pantry for food distribution, clothing distribution centre, a kitchen for a breakfast programme and skills training. Is it possible that more square feet were assigned to work with the wider community than the space for the worship of God?

Two different experiences of YAM Work camps, two different settings, both stretching, both eye-opening and both challenging me to face myself and to better understand what God required if you chose to join Him in mission.

Mission as Work

Mission ‘beyond borders’ then became the focus of my work. Fast forward ten years from 2000 when, while on a hiatus from full time ministry with UCJCI, I lived in the United Kingdom. During the last two years of that time I joined the staff of the Church of Scotland in the World Mission Department as Twinning Development Officer. My role involved fostering and facilitating relationships between congregations in the Church of Scotland and congregations within partner churches across the world. Both the experience of living and working in a ‘strange land’ where again I encountered the unfamiliar and was out of my comfort zone, as well

as the substance of the work itself brought me face to face with a perspective that mission is charity.

Some congregations missed the point of ‘walking alongside in friendship’ and could not get past a donor-recipient model of relationship. A twinning relationship was intended to be mutually beneficial; everyone has something to give and everyone has something to receive. I rejoiced with those whose encounters through visits helped them to understand that truth. I wrestled with deeply established beliefs that collecting and sending out-of-use computers, clothes and shoes was the ‘be all and end all’ of mission. Having returned to the land of my birth, I found that I was still often occupying space outside my comfort zone because the role of Regional and then Mission Secretary with CWM often beckoned me into unfamiliar and sometimes uncomfortable spaces. CWM, the challenger, supporter and inspiration which helped in the founding of CANACOM was now the classroom of learning and the avenue of service for me in my mission engagement. As I work with UCJCI and the Guyana Congregational Union in the Caribbean region of CWM, I play the role of encourager and instigator as I challenge both member churches to discern where God is at work and beckoning them to, ‘Come over to Macedonia’. Working side by side with these member churches helping them to accomplish their mission priorities is only part of the story. The other side is to be found in the many opportunities presented to encounter issues of importance to the wider global community which often manifest in local settings – issues such as climate change, human trafficking,

gender justice and militarization. All are legitimate engagements in mission.

A more recent assignment of the responsibility of coordinating CWM's Partner in Mission (missionaries) programme has further enhanced my understanding of mission. Through the PIM programme I encounter stories of partners who work alongside member churches in nursing, theological education, dentistry, administration with the common features of people willing to share themselves and others willing to receive them.

God's Plan...My Choice

So what have I discovered and what of my self-discovery? I now understand that mission opportunities can be found on one's doorstep or beyond one's place of familiarity whether that is home country, congregation or community. I now understand that God is already at work in the world actively pursuing fullness of life for all creation. I now understand that fullness of life embraces so many possibilities including a new relationship in Christ as well as clean water. I now understand the immense capacity of human beings to bless each other and that is not dependent on where one originates. I now know that mission is not the romantic-ride-off-into-the-sunset experience I sometimes hear described. It is hard work that often involves tears and struggles in relationship with people...yes, even those with whom we share faith. I now understand that mission often involves the uncomfortable and the unfamiliar and that it is important for me to seek first to understand. I now understand that often it means showing up and asking "How can I help?"

And me...what have I discovered about myself. I have discovered that I have gifts which can be and have been offered in the service of God by serving people. Sometimes it's the gift of listening, friendship, encouragement. Sometimes it's discernment. I now know that the path to changing one's perspective and attitudes begins with facing oneself and being honest with oneself; being willing to admit the stuff which is not so good. I now know that God often shows us the best of ourselves when we are placed in what we perceive to be the worst circumstances. My most important discovery is that it is a privilege to join my God, my Saviour, my Creator in mission and yes, it is my calling as well as my choice.

Living Missional Lives on a Diverse Landscape: Some Thoughts on Reconstructing Mission

Michael N. Jagessar

Introduction

Locating the Conversation

My association with CANACOM is linked to my ministry in Grenada and Curacao in the late 80's and 90's. It is not insignificant that the Presbyterian Church of Grenada and the United Protestant Church of Curacao increased their participation in CANACOM during the time I shared in and received much from these two communities. I must confess that I hold a different view from that of the Rev. Ashley Smith in his engagement with the Presbyterian Church of Grenada, as recounted in the first volume. I now write as someone living and working in the United Kingdom, and so as someone from outside (with a degree of insider-ness) looking in.

The Caribbean and where CANACOM member churches are located has a very diverse and plural landscape. We pride ourselves about our diversity. At the same time, I am not sure that CANACOM has given much agency on how you do mission or reconstruct Christian mission given this reality of a culturally and religiously diverse landscape. To this end, the ensuing conversation and discourse that follows will be shaped around various concerns and questions. These include the challenges of sharing the 'good news' in increasingly diverse and plural contexts; ways in which concepts of ethnicities and cultures are constructed, and how they

shape our relationships; the possibility of dialogue informing and shaping our mission practice and enabling us to rediscover God in Christ in a deeper ways; what is distinctive about Christian spirituality *vis à vis* the spirituality of our religious neighbours in sharing the good news of God's offer of full life for all; and the new shape(s) our theologies of mission will need to take in contexts that are continuously changing and are becoming more and more complex.

The reflection will not be attempting to answer these concerns and questions, but to use them as a framework for a conversation around which some thoughts will emerge on reconstructing mission. I will draw from my personal experiences and employ aspects of a postcolonial optic in the conversation.

Locating Essay Title and Clarifying Terms

I am placing an intentional emphasis on 'living missional lives', drawing from my personal journey lived out in plural contexts in Caribbean and presently UK and from my teaching of interfaith studies, intercultural theological perspectives, and postcolonial hermeneutics. By 'missional lives' I mean living that reflects a lifestyle that is faithful to the way of Jesus who modelled God's *oikonomia* (economy or plan) for the *oikoumene* (the whole inhabited earth that includes all of creation). The emphasis here is on an incarnational way of being. It is about walking the 'fullness of life' God-talk. Consequently, a fundamental premise and question is the 'logic' or more correctly the 'illogic', that if Christian mission comes from a God of deep and everlasting love and compassion for

the whole *oikoumene*, what then are the implications for its reconstruction?

If mission is God's mission, as articulated by most contemporary church and missiological documents, then it is reasonable to deduce that there is something about God having the final word and all we can do as humans is to live in faithfulness to the best that is in us and to the way that we are committed to. Hence, the emphasis on 'living missional lives' focuses the conversation on mission that becomes a way of life that is grounded on the interrelated habit of loving God and loving neighbour and the implications of such an attitude and lifestyle is what should inform our reconstructing of mission.

Any 'reconstructing' in a specifically Christian context will be premised on the need to recognize that the process of 'reconstructing' cannot happen without interrogating, deconstructing, reconstructing and shedding of all the distasteful interpretations and traditions that have evolved and contradict the Christian's living and walking of missional lives, that is, God-in-Jesus-Way.

Locating Self, Socialization, Faith Journey and Ministry

My take on this topic is subjective, hence the need to locate who I am, the influences on my faith journey, and my privileged position as a Black-Indo Caribbean male academic and practitioner. I am doing this as recognition of my own accountability and the ways in which my views are shaped, without being fully determined, by the situations I occupy. Further, I agree with Carlos F. Cardoza-

Orlandi that “mission is the sharing of our biography, of our struggle to see, hear, smell, touch, and taste God’s performance in the drama of our lives, in creation’s common script.”¹

I am a progeny of the history of colonial indentureship (or modified slavery) of Indians from the subcontinent. I grew up in a context where my grandparents, parents and siblings on both sides are practising Hindus, Muslims and Christians. Religion was certainly the most observable fact of daily life as religious diversity was a given in that very plural community in Guyana. I have inherited an interfaith life with all the extras that come with the blessings of multiple religious heritages. Thus, it was natural to follow one grandparent at her Hindu rituals of morning pujas (prayers) and on other feast days, another to church (Black step-grandfather), and yet another (maternal) to the Mosque or for midday prayers if we were in the rice fields.

My transition to the Christian faith happened in the context of secondary school that was church-based (Lutheran High School). This transition was more of a turning towards, rather than turning from. For all these various religious impulses have enabled a more expansive, generous and clearer view of my Christian faith and, at the same time helped me to understand it (that faith) differently. Dialogue is existential and real for me – happening all the time before and after my transition to walk the Jesus Way. This dialogical interplay with its plural religious and cultural impulses is what informs my theological discourse, writing and teaching.

My multiple religious and cultural heritage is not without tensions. I have learned to live creatively with these and negotiate

“third or in-between spaces” long before it has been theorised by the postcolonial pundits.² Ecclesial and religious traditions are yet to find a theology to touch and embrace people like myself – travellers, not cemented or chained long-term boarders.³ The journey allows me to get to places that I cannot fully figure out. Most of the time, I am stranded somewhere between origin and destination. I often move backward, forward, outside and ‘limbo-ing’ to a third space or in-between spaces simultaneously in my border-crossing journey, unable to return to the same place. Like a dancer, I savour transitional moments; like a musician I strive to discern and handle pauses between the notes as I experience the Divine in the in-between spaces in surprising ways. As part of my identity, these religious impulses can live simultaneously in my heart, even when they seem to be contradictory and they have contributed to enabling me to see that God is larger than any particular faith and that it is futile to live within the confines of arrogant exactitudes. It is not surprising then that this will influence my take on the reconstruction of mission.

As a minister doing ministry in a variety of contexts (Guyana, Grenada, Curacao and Birmingham), the foregoing influences shaped the ways in which my practice evolved over the years. Mission and evangelism were not key words; instead, living in faith and faithfulness, with commitment and openness, and the Jesus Way of living a Eucharistic life have featured prominently in my efforts to model a vocation with love of God and neighbour at the heart of the journey. This was in the context of religious plurality (Hinduism, Islam, Rastafarianism, and other Caribbean religions heavily

influenced by African religions). Throughout, I have tried to enable a process of reframing questions by working with statements such as salvation belongs only to God; Christians do not possess salvation, we participate in it; we do not offer but only witness to salvation; and that any decision as to who is saved should be left to the providence of the Divine. I have discovered that such reframing of statements demand humility and ask us to rediscover different theological languages to articulate what is at the core of our belief with commitment, less arrogance and more openness. I have also discovered that people in the pews and on the streets identify and wrestle with similar thoughts and questions. Here, then, is an invitation to improve our ‘grammar’ in the articulation of our faith and living faithful missional lives.

The Postcolonial Optics and Reconstructing Mission

As a member of the Caribbean Diaspora, my history and heritage have been shaped in the context of colonialism and postcolonialism. As already noted, themes such as hybridity, multiple identities and religious heritages with all its complexities and third space theologizing are significant to my journey. In this regard the postcolonial optic as employed by Biblical scholars and theologians has been helpful in my teaching, reflecting and writing.⁴

In the context of the history of the Caribbean, empire, Christianity, church and mission have been deeply involved and implicated in the oppression of the region. Mission, church and empire are closely related as are the destinies of the colonized (Caliban) and colonizer (Prospero).⁵

Caribbean theologian, William Watty notes that the basic fault line in mission, evangelism and witness (during slavery and post-emancipation period) “was not only that the African was culturally inferior, but that he had nothing of worth on which to draw...To evangelize was to fill that spiritual and cultural vacuum, to create a black European and to call the product ‘Christian’.”⁶

According to Dianne M. Stewart⁷ this was so effective that Caribbean people are still unable to mine their African-based religious traditions or the “ancestral Word” for insights into Black God-talk. This myopic take and denial of one’s identity has meant that Caribbean Christianity may look very Black, yet remain trapped in a predominantly Eurocentric Christianity, reminiscent of Frantz Fanon’s thesis of *Black Skins, White Masks*⁸.

A postcolonial scrutiny, however, will take the interrogation beyond the history to scrutinize the present practices and theology of churches in what used to be former colonies as well as the ‘former’ mission centres. For, if as Malueke noted, “‘Colonial sovereignty’ and the theology that supported the colonial project was grounded ‘on three forms of violence,’ namely, “founding violence, the violence of legitimation, and.... violence meant to establish and demonstrate authority,”⁹ then in our reconstruction of mission a number of questions will need to be asked and answered. Reconstructing mission will benefit from employing the postcolonial tool to interrogate and ask critical questions of the Christian faith as received, internalized and practised in the Caribbean and among Black British people of a Caribbean ancestry.

In the reconstruction of mission, it must be the scandalous plight of the marginalized and suffering people that should frame the interpretative optics through which we reread scriptures, traditions, and mission history: hence, my emphasis on living missional lives. Rethinking mission in this regard is more than a critique of complicity and past sins: it is about what we do with these sins, how we give agency to the silent voices and how we interrogate and reconstruct theological notions undergirding mission, and not reinscribe oppressive practices – be they doctrines or interpretations of texts related to mission. Certainly, a postcolonial reading of biblical texts will bring to the fore, question and lay bare the ways hermeneutists from the centres of power have used texts towards imperialising, totalizing and exclusivist ends. So, in what ways can a postcolonial reading help CANACOM reconfigure our mission theology and practice of faith and faithfulness on a plural landscape?

Reconstructing Mission: Proposals from a Postcolonial Perspective

I offer a few proposals that I perceive necessary in a conversation in the reconstructing of mission that takes the religious plurality of the Caribbean seriously. These proposals are located within all the foregoing, including a postcolonial perspective.

In reconstructing mission, I suggest that both the deposits of faith (inherited traditions) and its presentation need critical scrutiny. The ways in which the deposits of faith have been arrived at and are presented must relate to how it was re-presented in the first instance and how it continues to be presented today.

Re-presentations and presentations are not value-free. Thus, from a postcolonial optic there will be the need to interrogate the so-called ‘deposit of faith’. The postcolonial optic is primarily concerned with detecting, questioning, challenging and exposing how the dominated are represented by the dominant, the link between power and knowledge and the locating of ideologies in plots and characterisation in texts and their interpretations. What, for instance, in the arriving at and solidifying of this deposit of faith, happened to the marginal and dissenting voices? Why were they represented by the early church as heretical? What is the link between this deposit, empire, the missionary enterprise, mission and theology? As Sugirtharajah poignantly observes, “Colonial discourse is staunchly wedded to unvarying and exclusive truth and tolerates no dissent or debate.”¹⁰

Further, a postcolonial perspective, as Kwok Pui-lan contends, “offers an invaluable vantage point on theology, because it interrogates how religious and cultural productions are enmeshed in the economic and political domination of colonialism and empire building.”¹¹ The postcolonial imagination, according to Christopher Duraisingh, rejects the colonial tendency to “bifurcate reality and organize everyday life and discourse in terms of binaries” and to represent “identities as unified and fixed” rather than giving agency to their multiple, historical location and fluid nature.¹² Moreover, while the colonial imagination stifles diversity and difference with notions of unity, uniformity and sameness, “the postcolonial approach to reality is multicultural, reciprocal and dialogical” or “*multivoiced, dialogical and polycentric.*”¹³

While I would want to affirm that living missional lives of faith and faithfulness is at the heart of Christian faith and faithfulness and that the embodiment of theology and its practice is a dynamic vocation, I would also find it necessary to interrogate what this entails and the implications in terms of the dominant discourse. For the fact remains that, while we have had nice sounding platitudes such as the *mission Dei*, in practice Christians have operated as if mission is the church's rather than God's. It is one thing to declare that mission is the heartbeat of the church; the test is our willingness to allow such a declaration to cause us to scrutinize our notions of church and how we live out this mission. Do we listen to different voices and heartbeats or quickly close conversation? What kind of Christ and church do we project? For as Maluleke rightly notes, "postcolonial mission starts with and entails the rehabilitation and re-conceptualisation of Christian mission."¹⁴ Reconstructing mission must certainly be interested in the transition/translation of 'mission is' into 'mission as'.¹⁵

On a multifaith landscape *mission as the Missio Dei* remains a significant and timely position to develop, rethink and articulate. Here we need to note that all human reference to the Divine will have to remain provisional. There are, of course, critical questions to be asked of our use of the *Missio Dei*. For instance, what is the nature of this God and the people God has chosen that we still hold on to? When we re-define Christian mission as *Missio Dei* how much of our understanding of the *Deus* still operates within the confines of a certain kind of deposit of faith that limits the Divine. There is certainly the need to interrogate the nature of the *Deus* in

question. Is our understanding of the *Deus*, for instance, a homogenous and unifying one that will not allow space for ‘multiple monotheism’, for a Divine embodied in diversity? It is not unreasonable to suggest that Christianity has been too preoccupied with a terrifying singularity – one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God, etc. Our diverse landscape (faiths, peoples, cultures) presents us with another reality – a plural one.

It is time to rediscover the grandeur and the *pleroma* of the Divine and the Divine’s work of grace throughout the whole of creation. Oneness is not the only tune and dance of the Divine. From a postcolonial reading, *mission Dei* that continues to be premised on the ‘logic of oneness’ must be critically engaged with as it smacks of imperialising and totalizing tendencies. As Laurel Schneider notes: “[t]he logic of the One is powerful and it is not extricable from monarchical and supremacist entailments.”¹⁶ She goes on to note that “most of Christian theology has fallen into more or less of a Docetic groove, unwilling to grant to divinity the freedom to incarnate except in one ‘conclusive’ time and place in the person of Jesus.”¹⁷

It may be that the crafters of the preparatory paper of CWME, “Mission and Evangelism in Unity Today” were aware of these tensions as reflected in their statement:

The mission of God (missio Dei) has no limits or barriers; it has been addressed to and has been at work within the entire human race and the whole of creation throughout history. Jesus’ parables of the good Samaritan and the sheep and the

*goats and his dialogue with the Syro-Phoenician woman clearly point in that direction. [para.11]*¹⁸

The document goes on to note the tension between the Christian understanding of God's offer of salvation through Jesus Christ and the recognition that no one can limit the saving power of the Divine. One implication here for reconstructing mission is the open question as to the signs and fruits of the Spirit in and among peoples of faiths or no faith. Here is a challenge for reconstructing mission: in the articulating of the *mission Dei* how do we give space and agency to the illogic of multiplicity without always reverting into the logic of One?

I want to affirm *mission as dialogue*¹⁹ or conversation. Dialogue is a *condition sine qua non* of mission. The *Deus* of the *missio Dei* is always in dialogue with the world through creation and in the incarnation. Caribbean theologian William Watty writes:

*Incarnation lies at the heart of not only [the Church's] theology and message, but its very being, just as dialogue holds the key to its doing. The pure word which takes no account of the flesh, is a delusion, just as monologues as an evangelizing method is apt to be misleading. It is through and with and in the flesh – the ambiguities, the limitations and the particularities of history, culture and language – that it has pleased God to reveal the glory of the Word, full of grace and truth.*²⁰

A Christian theology of mission cannot be anything but dialogical, working on the premise that diversity is a given and countering every attempt at articulating notions of 'purity'. Moreover, it is wishful thinking to imagine the world as a totally Christian space.

And in the context of Birmingham (from which this essay is written), religious diversity will not only blossom but will also become more exciting with dialogue a critical habit of peoples of faith or none.

The postcolonial optic will insist that any such dialogue/conversation commences with an interrogation of one's self, complex subjectivity, ambivalences and prejudices. As we have already noted, any engagement in dialogue or conversation with our neighbours, whatever their faith, must start with self-scrutiny. This starting from self enables us to understand that before we can ever presume to speak, we also need to make space for others to enter dialogue with us. Self interrogation is one effective way to create such hospitable and humble space. The encounter/relationship becomes an '*I and Thou*' encounter built and sustained through mutual and reciprocal engagement. In order to learn how to hear another's claims, demands that we are critically self-aware and conscious of our own unspoken assumptions and prejudices. This is huge challenge.

Perhaps, honest self-interrogation can enable us to avoid some of these pitfalls. My experience over the years makes me feel confident to articulate mission as asking questions rather than offering answers with both commitment to what one holds to and a genuine openness that the dialogue will lead to new discoveries, as on matters related to the Divine all views are only a glimpse and not the full picture. The desire to want to rush in with answers is a habit we now need to 'kick'. It is interesting to note that at his trial Jesus was consistent in refusing to answer any of the charges and

questions posed to him (as recorded by the gospel writers). According to Laurel Schneider it was the early church that attempted to answer the questions with answers that have become solidified in our creeds, liturgies and doctrines (or our deposit of faith).²¹

A dialogical attitude demands a hospitable lifestyle, hence *mission as hospitality* is my next proposal in reconstructing mission. How has mission used power and money to manipulate and compromise hospitality modelled after God in Christ needs to be reflected on. Why and how has mission theology of the Church been used to restrict the expansive generosity of the Divine only for an elected group? What have we done, appropriating the words of Walter Brueggemann, to arrive with a “myth of scarcity” to represent a God whose nature is best characterized by a “liturgy of abundance”²² and fullness of life? One of the characteristics of the colonial agenda is the desire to restrict hospitality.²³

Hospitality is both about practising and living the command to ‘love our neighbours as ourselves’ and an opportunity to discover God’s expansive generosity anew. This is not about an easy or simple way of relating to others. Hospitality is also a risky opportunity, as living a life turned towards one’s neighbour entails engaging with the power of mutual transformation. It is not about silencing voices. Moreover, we need to recognise and constantly interrogate any missional relationship built around hospitality, as it is never one of equals, however well intended we may be and whatever scriptural text it may be based on. Indeed, the idea of

hospitality is not without a certain degree of ambivalence given its risky nature.²⁴

Relations between guest and host are never static – they are always fluid and there is the element of “guest/host reversal” that is crucial in the relationship.²⁵ How will the re-visioning puncture imperialistic and oppressive dualisms?

This brings me to my next proposal: *mission as negotiating limbonal spaces*. The concern here is this: given the complexity and messiness of people’s existentially lived realities, how can mission enable a positive exploring of the space of in-between-ness or what I term the ‘limbonal spaces’²⁶ that people have to daily negotiate because of multiple identities, heritages and circumstances. I am yet to find a theology of mission in any religion that can relate to the many people like myself who embody hybridity: multiple religious heritages and multiple blessings. Others, such as Rita Nakashima Brock write of “living with interstitial integrity.” She observes: “interstitial integrity is how I improvise a self, recognising the diverse cultures and experiences that have made me who I am. It is how I mix a life together from myriads of ingredients.”²⁷

Yann Martel in *The Life of Pi*²⁸ presents readers with young Pi who had encounters with the Hindu, Muslim and Christian faiths and found dimensions of truth in all three and so attended worship in the church, mandir and mosque. He saw no harm in inhabiting the spaces of all three. What he had difficulty with was when the leaders of the three faiths, after realising what was going on, demanded that he should choose just one to follow.

There is a link between this story and those of us who teach, learn and live an interfaith vocation as Christians. Can we ever return ‘home’ as the same person? Can home ever be the same again? Reconstructing mission needs to enable some honest heart searching on this matter. There is, however, a greater issue at stake here: with increasing migration and movement of peoples, the ‘other’ is increasingly not about people from a specific geographic location.

Reconstructing mission requires a new way of understanding issues of self and other, an intercultural or cross-cultural vision that will offer alternatives to increasing violence premised on ethnic and national identities. Homi Bhabha has argued that one of the consequences of colonialism is that the colonizer and the colonized have been brought together in identity formation that is continually in a process of hybridity.

Bhabha describes hybridity as the “third space” where the meaning of cultural and political authority is negotiated without eliding or normalizing the differential structures in conflict. Bhabha’s “third space” can be located as the place for the construction of identities that are neither one nor the other.²⁹ Long before Bhabha, however, Wilson Harris,³⁰ a Guyanese author, had countered opposites and binaries by blurring boundaries and presenting readers with characters whose identities are a fluid continuum of unbounded awareness that transcends time and place.

Harris’ plea for cross-culturality gives agency to the in-between and liminal spaces that challenge the habitual and the normative opening vistas with multiple possibilities that release us from the

boundaries in which we have imprisoned ourselves. Hence, we find people like Volker Küster writing of ‘third space’ as “the space of transcendence” and as “a meeting place for the dialogue of life, a place of wisdom for the dialogue of the mind, and a place of spiritual experiences for the dialogue of the heart” without “sacrificing the sanctuary” of anyone.³¹ Küster, however, still seems to work with a restrictive view as he is unable to allow for the animating free play to transgress neatly confined sanctuaries into something more exciting. Mission as *negotiating limbonal spaces*, largely influenced by the contours of my Caribbean heritage (which is about shores rather than boundaries) offer possibilities for changes that can alter our perceiving, thinking and doing of mission.

In a plural context, Christians are not the only people of faith with sacred scriptures. Hence, one of the implications already highlighted by many scholars and practitioners is the need to *reread the Bible* with this reality in mind. Consequently, the reconstructing mission requires that we also rethink our use of biblical passages in support of mission theology. The invitation here is to revisit especially those biblical texts that have informed the theories and practices of Christian mission and to search for alternative readings which overcome any exclusivist stance and instead offer liberating perspectives of dialogue and solidarity across different cultures, social locations and faith traditions. In this regard Choan S. Song puts the case poignantly. He urges us to attempt “to make a biblical and theological shift from ‘the Great Commission’ to ‘the Great Commandment’.”³² To reconstruct a theology of Christian mission, born out of love (rather than truth), with the command to live a life

of God's healing love, will mean a lot of reshaping to programs and practices of Christian mission, starting with one's personal life of faith and faithfulness.

Conclusion

I draw these reflections to a close by noting that reconstructing mission in the light of the foregoing proposals will require that both the teaching and content of mission must be critically interrogated. A postcolonial scrutiny of content, methodology and assumptions in the history of mission will uncover that "it has been mediated through a colonial imagination"³³ and the question is whether the content has changed in view of the shift in language, the reality of plural landscapes and notions such as the *mission Dei* and 'reverse' mission. Reconstructing mission will continue to be a demanding undertaking. Empires do not disappear; they mutate and reappear in various guises. This is besides the fact that mission is a million-dollar enterprise!

What the foregoing underscores is our need to grapple with how much we are shaped by empire.³⁴ Such a recognition and starting point is crucial to CANACOM finding new paradigms across our various interdependent landscapes and lives. Living missional lives grounded on God's offer of abundant life for all is about living the gospel as we embody this message. The critical test for the present and future of CANACOM, borrowing from Kwok Pui-lan, is "how much it contributes to lessening human suffering; to building communities that resist oppression within the church, academy, and

the society; to furthering the liberation of those among us who are most disadvantaged, primarily the women and the children.”³⁵

A Prayer Based on Micah 6:8

Carlington Keen

Micah 6:8 - “ He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?”

Praise be to you, O Lord. When we consider your goodness and your mercies, we the Caribbean and North America Council for Mission (CANACOM) thank you for the awesome ways in which you have guided us for more than three decades.

God of Justice, Mercy and Peace, we of CANACOM acknowledge the unlimited nature of your greatness and your love. We confess, O God, that you are more ready to listen than we are to pray, more ready to hear the cries of those appealing for justice than we are to act.

Lord in a world of injustice, selfishness and lack of mercy, we confess that we are not always disciples worthy of your calling. Grant us, O God, a true sense of humility, that in carrying out your ministry and mission we become a beacon of light in a world where injustice, crime and violence are seeking to overwhelm us.

We are grateful that you make it possible for all of us to find ways of communicating despite our different languages. Wherever we are located across the Caribbean or North America, we thank you that each one of us is able to identify with and speak to you in our own language. Lord, may we find courage as together, we bear witness to your presence. May we sit together around a table of

conversation even with those who continue to perpetuate disunity. Send your Holy Spirit upon us now that we may be empowered to challenge situations where peace, justice, mercy, compassion and kindness are lacking within and across the Caribbean, North America and the entire world.

So Lord, whether we operate as a member church of CANACOM or simply as part of the larger body of Christ, may we never cease to *rescue the perishing and to care for the dying* and to demonstrate through our own practice that Jesus is still mighty to save. I pray today that we will always do what you require of us, by doing justly and by loving mercy and by walking humbly with you, our loving God.

May we not seek to promote individual rights, but rather to create an environment where justice and dignity are experienced by all. Gracious God, all this we ask through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

Amen

NOTES

Kenneth Ross

¹ See Kenneth R. Ross, Jooseop Keum, Kyriaki Avtzi and Roderick R. Hewitt, eds., *Ecumenical Missiology: Changing Landscapes and New Conceptions of Mission* (Oxford/ Regnum and Geneva: World Council of Churches, 2016), pp. 54-57.

² See William Richey Hogg, *Ecumenical Foundations: A History of the International Missionary Council and its Nineteenth Century Background* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1952), pp. 340-41.

³ Birgitta Larsson and Emilio Castro, "From Missions to Mission," in John Briggs, Mercy Amba Oduyoye and Georges Tsetsis, *A History of the Ecumenical Movement*, Volume 3 (1968-2000) (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 2004), p. 142.

⁴ See Dongsun Kim, "Partnership and Resource Sharing," in Ross, Keum, Avtzi and Hewitt, *Ecumenical Missiology*, pp. 255-66.

⁵ Ori Brafman and Rod A. Beckstrom, *The Starfish and the Spider: The Unstoppable Power of Leaderless Organizations* (New York: Penguin, 2006), pp. 34-35.

⁶ *Church of Scotland General Assembly 2001, Report of the Special Commission anent Review and Reform* (Edinburgh: Church of Scotland, 2001), p. 36/5.

⁷ See Kenneth R. Ross, "Like a Mask Dancing: Partnership in Mission Enters a New Mode," *Journal of Rethinking Mission* (April 2008).

⁸ Romans 15:29.

⁹ Philippians 1:3-5.

¹⁰ Robert J. Priest, Terry Dischinger, Steve Rasumussen, C. M. Brown, "Researching the Short-Term Mission Movement," *Missiology: An International Review*, Vol. XXXIV, 4 (October 2006), pp. 433-34 [431-50].

¹¹ Willem Saayman, "'Missionary by its Very Nature'. A Time to Take Stock," *Missionalia*, Vol. 28/1 (April 2000), pp. 19-20.

¹² John V. Taylor, *The Uncancelled Mandate* (London: Church House, 1998), p. 10.

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¹ Bosch, D. J. (2005). *Transforming mission*. Orbis Books.

² Who is Theodora? She was the empress of the Byzantine Empire and wife of the Emperor Justinian I. [500-548]. Theodora performed in the Hippodrome. She prostituted and danced; however, she never forgot her

root and actively encouraged young women to come off the street and enter the palace where they were taught to read and write.

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¹ Burchell Taylor, "Onesimus – The Voiceless Powerless Initiator of the Liberation Process" in *Caribbean Theology: Preparing for the Challenges Ahead*, Howard Gregory, editor (Kingston, Jamaica: Canoe Press, University of the West Indies, 1995), p. 21.

² Burchell Taylor, "Paul – Facilitator of Liberation in Solidarity" in *Caribbean Theology: Preparing for the Challenges Ahead*, Howard Gregory, editor (Kingston, Jamaica: Canoe Press, University of the West Indies, 1995), p. 52.

³ Maitland Evans. "Partnership-in-Mission, Revisited," in *Congregations in global mission* (Louisville: World Mission, Presbyterian Church, USA, 1998), p. 14.

Michael Jagessar

¹ Carlos F. Cardoza-Orlandi, "Rediscovering Caribbean Christian Identity: Biography and Missiology at the Shore (Between the Dry land and the Sea," in *Voices from the Third World* 27/1 (June 2004), p. 120. [pp. 115-144]

² See Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London/New York: Routledge, 1994); Trinh T. Minh-ha, *When the Moon Waxes Red: Representation, Gender and Cultural Politics* (New York: Routledge, 1991); See, Volker Kuester, "Who, With Whom, About What? Exploring the Landscape of Inter-Religious Dialogue", in *Exchange* 33(1) (2004), [73-92].

³ Cf. Donna E. Schaper, *Raising Interfaith Children: Spiritual Orphans or Spiritual Heirs?* (New York: A Crossroad Book, A Crossroad Publishing, 1999).

⁴ Postcolonialism is not about the demise of colonialism; as 'post' as it embodies both 'after' and 'beyond'. It is because of and since. It is more about a critical stance, oppositional tactic or subversive reading strategy. According to Christopher Duraisingh, the postcolonial optic affirms "a new mode of imagining, a new cultural logic, posited over against the euro-centric monologic and the colonial manner of thinking and visioning reality" (Duraisingh, 2001, p. 337). [R.S. Sugirtharajah, *Postcolonial Reconfigurations: An Alternative Way of Reading the Bible and Doing Theology*, London: SCM Press, 2003. p. 4; Christopher Duraisingh, "Towards A Postcolonial Re-Visioning of the Church's Faith, Witness and Communion," Ian T. Douglas and Kwok Pui-lan, eds, *Beyond Colonial Anglicanism: The Anglican Communion in the Twenty-First Century* (New York: Church Publishing, 2001), p. 337 [pp. 337-367].

⁵ Tinyiko Sam Maluleke, "Postcolonial Mission: Oxymoron or New Paradigm?" in *Swedish Missiological Themes*, 95(4) (2007), p. 513. [pp. 503-526]

⁶ William Watty, "Evangelization as Dialogue: A Caribbean Perspective," in *International Review of Mission* 83/330 (July 1994), p. 431. [pp. 429-436]

⁷ Dianne M. Stewart, *Three Eyes for the Journey: African Dimensions of the Jamaican Religious Experience* (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2005).

⁸ Frantz Fanon, *Black Skins, White Masks* (New York: Grove Press, 1967).

⁹ Tinyiko Sam Maluleke, "Postcolonial Mission: Oxymoron or New Paradigm?" in *Swedish Missiological Themes*, 95, 4 (2007), p. 507. [pp. 503-526]

¹⁰ R. S. Sugirtharajah, "The First, Second and Third Letters of John," in *A Postcolonial Commentary on the New Testament Writings*, edited by R. S. Sugirtharajah (T&T Clark/Concilium, 2007), p. 413.

¹¹ Kwok Pui-lan, "Theology and Social Theory" in *Empire: The Christian Tradition: New Readings of Classical Theologians* edited by Kwok Pui-lan, Don H. Compier, Joerg Rieger (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2007), p. 19. [pp. 15-30]

¹² Christopher Duraisingh, "Towards a Postcolonial Re-visioning of the Church's Faith Witness, and Communion," in *Beyond Colonial Anglicanism: The Anglican Communion in the Twenty-First Century*, edited by Ian T. Douglas & Kwok Pui-lan, eds. *Twenty-First Century*, (New York: Church Publishing House, 2001), p. 345 [pp.337-367]

¹³ Christopher Duraisingh, "Towards a Postcolonial Re-visioning of the Church's Faith Witness, and Communion," Ian T. Douglas & Kwok Pui-lan, eds., *Beyond Colonial Anglicanism: The Anglican Communion in the Twenty-First Century*, (New York: Church Publishing House, 2001), p. 347. [pp. 337-367]

¹⁴ Tinyiko Sam Maluleke, "Postcolonial Mission: Oxymoron or New Paradigm?" in *Swedish Missiological Themes*, 95(4) (2007), p. 524 [pp. 503-526]

¹⁵ Tinyiko Sam Maluleke, "Postcolonial Mission: Oxymoron or New Paradigm?" in *Swedish Missiological Themes*, 95(4) (2007), p. 525. [pp. 503-526]

¹⁶ Laurel C. Schneider, *Beyond Monotheism: A Theology of Multiplicity* (Routledge: London, 2008), p. 26

¹⁷ Laurel C. Schneider, *Beyond Monotheism: A Theology of Multiplicity* (Routledge: London, 2008), p. 139.

¹⁸ <http://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/wcc-commissions/mission-and-evangelism/cwme-world-conference-athens->

2005/preparatory-paper-n-1-mission-and-evangelism-in-unity-today.html
[Emphasis is mine.]

¹⁹ Mission as dialogue has long been on the agenda and in the discourse of the World Council of Churches.

²⁰ William Watty, "Evangelization as Dialogue: A Caribbean Perspective" in *International Review of Mission* 83/330 (July 1994), p. 430. [pp. 429-436]

²¹ Laurel C. Schneider, *Beyond Monotheism: A Theology of Multiplicity* (Routledge: London and New York, 2008), p.173.

²² Walter Brueggemann, *Deep Memory, Exuberant Hope: Contested Truth in a Post-Christian World* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000), Edited by Patrick D. Miller, p. 69.

²³ R. S. Sugirtharajah, "The First, Second and Third Letters of John," in *A Postcolonial Commentary on the New Testament Writings*, ed. R.S. Sugirtharajah (T&T Clark/Concilium, 2007), p. 414.

²⁴ Any potential for hospitality is a potential for harm as it is for mutual sharing of gifts. [See, Mireille Rosello, *Postcolonial hospitality: the immigrant as guest* (California: Stanford University Press, 2001)]

²⁵ Mireille Rosello, *Postcolonial hospitality: the immigrant as guest* (California: Stanford University Press, 2001), p. 172.

²⁶ Here I draw from my Caribbean heritage and the works of writers and poets such as Wilson Harris, John Agard and Derek Walcott. Limbo, rather than representing the popular view of a 'tourist Caribbean', points to the violent clash of cultures (European, African, Asian and that of the original inhabitants of the region) and the inter/cross-cultural interaction that resulted in multiple identities and interstitial spaces where movement plays a significant part.

²⁷ Rita Nakashima Brock, "Cooking without Recipes: Interstitial Integrity," in *Off the Menu: Asian and Asian North American Women's Religion and Theology*, edited by Rita Nakashima Brock, Jung Ha Kim, Kwok Pui-Lan, Seung Ai Yang (Louisville & London: Westminster John Knox Press, 2007), p. 126. [pp. 125-143]

²⁸ Yann Martel, *The Life of Pi* (Edinburgh: Cannongate Books, 2002).

²⁹ Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Cultures* (London and New York: Routledge, 1994).

³⁰ Among Wilson Harris' numerous works, I note the following: *Tradition, the Writer and Society* (London: Faber and Faber, 1967); *The Palace of the Peacock* (London: Faber and Faber, 1960); *Infinite Rehearsal* (London: Faber and Faber, 1987); *The Ghost of Memory* (London: Faber and Faber, 2006).

³¹ Volker Küster (2004), "Who, With Whom, About What? Exploring the Landscape of Inter-Religious Dialogue," in *Exchange* 33(1), pp. 91-92. [pp. 73-92]

³² Choan-Seng Song writing in “From the Great Commission to the Great Commandment (A Biblical and Theological Shift).” Paper given on Consultation on Mission, the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan, June 2-3 (n.d[y]. Unpublished paper.

³³ Yatta Kanu, “Curriculum as Cultural Practice: Postcolonial Imagination” *Journal of the Canadian Association for Curriculum Studies* Volume 1 Number 1 Spring 2003, p.67-68. (pp.67-81)

³⁴ Joerg Rieger, “Christian Theology and Empires,” quoted in Kwok Pui-lan, “Theology and Social Theory” in Kwok Pui-lan, Don H. Compier, Joerg Rieger (eds.), *Empire and the Christian Tradition: New Readings of Classical Theologians* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2007), p. 13 [pp.1-13]

³⁵ Kwok Pui-lan, *Discovering the Bible in the Non-Biblical World* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1995), p. 31.

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