



**Council for World Mission Caribbean
2021 Members' Mission Forum**

Popular Report



From top left – Rev. Dr. Michael Jagessar, Mission Secretary for CWM Caribbean and Europe Regions, Mrs. Vickeisha King Burke, Programme Associate – CWM Caribbean and Coordinator- PIM Programme, Rev. Leander Warren, Assistant General Secretary of the GCU, Rev. Dr. Peter Cruchley – Mission Secretary for CWM’s Mission Development Unit, Miss Ominell Boyce GCU’s youth delegate, Mrs. Rose Wedderburn, CWM Board Member, Mrs. Jennifer P. Martin, Education in Mission Secretary for CANACOM (ecumenical representative), Rev. Elizabeth Gray King, URC Minister and Artist in Resident, Mrs. Janet McConnell, Human and Mission Resource Manager of the UCICI, Mrs. Sainimili Kata, Programme Associate - CWM Europe Region, Rev. Lembe Sivile, UCICI’s Partner in Mission from the UCZ, Mrs. Jewell Sinclair Torrington, GCU’s Mission Coordinator, Rev. Norbert Stephens, General Secretary of the UCICI, Rev. Sanya Beharry, Minister- PCTT and the MMF worship leader, Ms. Angela Martins, Chair of CANAAC (ecumenical representative), Ms. Vanessa Blissett, UCICI’s youth delegate, Rev. Jane Kaluba, UCICI’s Partner in Mission from the UCZ, and Ms. Faithlyn Stephens, GCU’s Partner in Mission from the UCICI.

Prepared by: The CWM Caribbean Team,
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“Breathe”

“Breathe life into dead and dying situations”, that was the resounding call at the Members’ Mission Forum for the Council for World Mission (CWM) Caribbean Region held via the Zoom platform on 18 and 19 May 2021. Member church delegations from the Guyana Congregational Union (GCU) and the United Church in Jamaica and the Cayman Islands (UCJCI), ecumenical guests, resource persons and mission partners gathered on both days under the theme, **‘Rise to Life: Confessing witness to life flourishing communities.’** The programme was enriched through worship sessions, theme reflection, responsive context reading, creative input from artist, musicians and poets, and virtual exposure visits.



Rev. Sanya Beharry – Worship Leader

Reflecting from Ezekiel 11:14-21, Rev. Sanya Beharry of the Presbyterian Church of Trinidad and Tobago challenged the delegates to be like Ezekiel, offering a glimmer of hope in dead situations. The threats to the establishment of life flourishing communities were named, those ongoing crucifixions of gender violence (against women and young girls), crime, unemployment, poverty, and racism. The delegates were tasked to whisper and breathe hope and truth in those circumstances that challenge ‘Rising to Life’. Through the lyrics of the popular hymn, “We are one in the Spirit”, Rev. Beharry called for the delegates to find ways to be in solidarity: *listening together – breathing together – and synchronizing with each other.*

Like a baby, who sees and experiences all things with fresh eyes, Rev. Beharry through 2 Corinthians 5:16-21, reminded the delegates of Jesus’ warning that anyone who does not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it. There was an encouragement to act as ‘babies’, imagining and seeing the possibilities and fresh thinking that will empower life flourishing communities.



Rev. Dr. Peter Cruchley – Theme Reflector

“Discipleship is a path of obedience, crossing a threshold, keeping us mindful of the changes we have to make to live wholesome lives,” Rev. Dr. Peter Cruchley explored with the delegates his understanding of the theme, ‘Rise to Life’. Delegates were also given space to reflect on scriptures that caused them to rise. Examples were given from John 10:10; Luke 10:25-37; Ezekiel 37; and Psalm 84. In confessing witness to life flourishing communities, there were calls for member churches to find ways to extent hands, hearts and presence to assist, accompany and advocate for those who are disenfranchised, motivated by the deep love of Christ and his offer of full life for all.

The MMF is intended to be a space where member church delegates affirm, peer assess, discern, and plan their engagements in mission. It is resourced and facilitated by CWM’s regional staff for the member churches to be informed, energised, and empowered to act. The MMF allows member churches to **HEAR**; H – Hear from each other in regions, across regions and ecumenically; E – Evaluate how they have been engaging in mission and peer-assess how it may be done differently to advance the church’s vision; A – Act and mobilise teams towards mission development; and R - Reflect together on matters that deal with God’s mission in the light of social, economic, political issues.



(from top right: Rev. Dr. Gordon Cowans of the UCJCI, Ms. Angela Martins of CANAAC – Caribbean and North America Area Council and Rev. Patricia Sheerattan-Bisnauth of the Guyana Presbyterian Church)

Rev. Norman Francis, Mission Reflector

In a timely and reflective ‘*Unscripted Context Reading*’, the life-denying issues which challenge full and flourishing life in the contexts of Guyana, Jamaica, and the Cayman Islands were named, discussed, and analyzed. Members of the panel firstly shared what were the urgent matters arising in their context then delved in the ways the church may respond to the arising matters.

In Jamaica, the fervent sense of justice and the compelling urge to agitate against injustice was noted as a point of celebration. However, the ease of access to guns and the associated costs of crime to the Jamaican economy were highlighted as issues with which the people wrestle. Caymanians were grateful for the opportunities afforded through advancements in technology and how it has allowed the church to remain open during the COVID-19 pandemic, but this was marred by the increasing family relationship issues, loss of jobs, health issues and violence against persons. Guyana, a beautiful multi-cultural melting pot of peoples celebrated the diversity in the evolution of its history. Running alongside this is the racial tension between the two (2) major ethnicities in Guyana which continues deny possibilities for life-flourishing communities. Issues of domestic violence and various forms of abuse, especially aimed at women and children, challenge the church to consider the ways they need to re-imagine mission and ministry that are life-flourishing.

It was a shared sentiment that the church has a very significant prophetic role to play in communities and needed to be an exemplar of peace, showcasing how people should live together in community. The church can play a significant role in creating an alternative future reality which is different from

its past of injustice and violence. The church has to be courageous in her advocacy and how she lives out her ministry within societies, so that people may see Christ relevantly in the here and now. In contemplating the question - *how can we breathe newness to life for the people in our various spaces*, the church was challenged by the mission reflector, Rev. Norman Francis, to redefine what was meant by “discipleship” as finding expression in the public arena or public square. Though the Christian faith may be personal it is not private. It must engage on the public square in the Jesus Way.

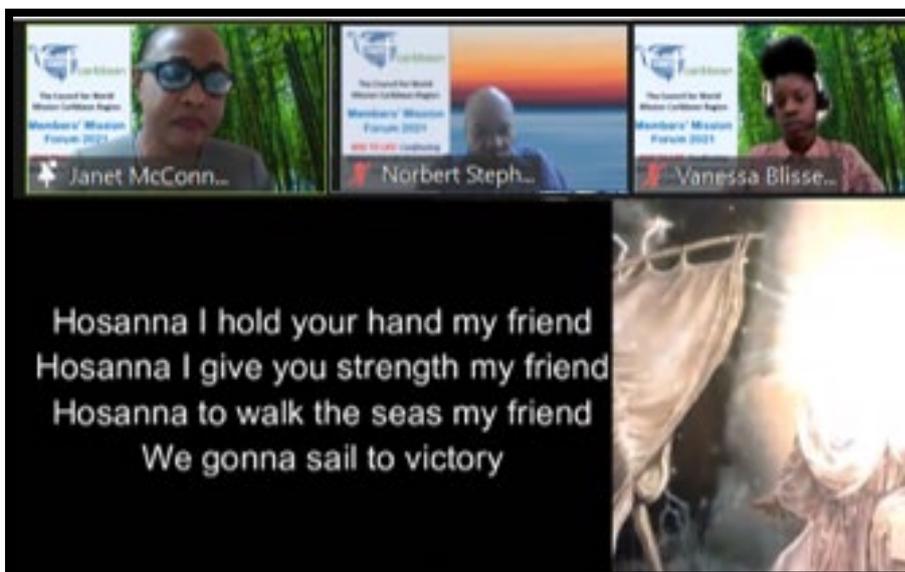
Rev. Francis issued a charge to the delegates to continue to be led by prophetic and visionary impulses as nothing short of radicalism will help to shape options for those who were ministered to and who minister. In the COVID-19 era, to remain **Relevant**, the church was challenged to **Redefine, Reinvent and Reposition**.



Mission Coordinator, GCU – Mrs. Jewell Sinclair Torrington

The GCU worship team, led by Mrs. Jewell Sinclair Torrington, used the analogy of a balloon to reflect on the theme. A balloon needs air to rise, one must **breathe** into it for it to inflate. As people of the Jesus-way, we have the power to not only resist but to be agents of transformation. Like we do with a balloon, we have the power to breathe air into the dead and dying situations. Death is not always marked by breathlessness, some situations are dying but not dead. We have the power to be a church that is caring and breathing life. Reflecting on Mark 2:5, 9-12, Mrs. Sinclair Torrington stated that to be silent is to be complicit. Jesus challenged us to look for opportunities to make a difference.

The churches were encouraged to continue to foster alternatives such as peace, justice and hope. There was no place for fear when you are called to be a radical disciple, a transforming disciple. Through Jesus, we have been gifted with life – resurrection life. Life which empowers us to **breathe!**



The UCICI MMF Delegation: Janet McConnell, Norbert Stephens and Vanessa Blissett during their closing worship presentation

The UCJCI offered the closing charge and prayer to end the two-day MMF gathering:

Enabling God, we praise You for this time we have spent together over the last two days. We have listened, we have discerned, enable us now to act and mobilize as we pursue the missional agenda of Rising to Life: Confessing Witness to Life Flourishing Communities. Thank You for resetting our collective agenda, recalibrating our intentions and refocusing our hearts and minds as we have shared our stories and our dreams for a more hopeful reality in our various contexts.

Directing God, help us to ensure that Your will for our lives and for the CWM Family are aligned. Help us to understand that we do not need full clarity to walk into the unique purpose You have inlaid in our lives and our ministries and mission together.

Inspiring God, help us to lift our eyes to seek You first today, and always, surrendering our need to achieve, understand, and be known. Shift our perspective to seek Your peace above all else.

Life-Sustaining God, in every situation we confront, examine and explore today and beyond today, let the Holy Spirit translate Your commands. Give us renewed strength and godly courage to obey You without reservation. Forgive us for striving beyond our means, worrying, and forcing results.

Unchanging God, only You know what lies ahead. You are our good God, just and righteous. Though our circumstances have changed and continue to change in these times, You are always our unwavering guide, protector, and shield.

Let Your wisdom and peace rain down on us today, as we seek You more than anything else. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

- Rev. Norbert Stephens, General Secretary - UCJCI