

LIVING STONES, LIVING HOPE

USPG⁺ PARTNERS IN
GLOBAL MISSION

A FIVE-SESSION STUDY COURSE
Exploring contextual theology

#LIVINGHOPE

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MAKING THE MOST OF THIS STUDY COURSE

1. Commit to attend all five sessions. The more you can attend, the more you will benefit and the more it will maintain the continuity of the group. Give yourself permission to refuse any other engagements or invitations that might arise at your regular study time.

2. Begin each study with a short time of silence to help centre the group and recall God's presence.

3. Commit to sharing honestly and to listening without judgement or trying to 'fix' someone else's life for them. Seek to create a safe atmosphere in which people feel able to share openly. Remember, none of us has all the answers. Our aim is to be authentic and whole - not perfect!

4. Acknowledge that everyone's experience of life and faith is unique and valuable. Seek to accept one another just as we truly are, just as God accepts each one of us.

5. Give space for everyone to speak, although no-one need feel obliged to speak. If you are someone who tends to share a lot, remember to leave space for others who find it harder to share.

6. Read the material in advance and spend time allowing the content to sink in - not necessarily needing to find the answers.

7. Remember that religious and theological words can mean different things to different people. Share your perspective and allow others to hold different perspectives.

8. Close each session in prayer.

9. Commit to reflect about what you have shared and learn more about how people in different contexts live out their faith. Each week you will discuss, reflect, pray and act.

LIVING HOPE

Any money given or raised as part of USPG's Lent Appeal, Living Hope, will go towards three of our partner churches and their justice programmes. The Zambia Anglican Council's Transformative Gender Justice programme, The Church of North India's Let My People Go programme and The Church of Brazil's Casa Noeli women's refuge.

The Zambia Anglican Council set up the Transformative Gender Justice Programme to raise awareness of gender justice issues and provide support, counselling, and skills to those who have experienced gender based violence.

Loveness Malenga, a 41 year old mother of nine, was married to a man who was physically abusive towards Loveness and her children. The Zambia Anglican Council referred her to their Transformative Gender Justice programme where she accessed counselling,



Loveness Malenga

a grant to buy seeds and a savings group which enabled her to live independently. The money Loveness has earned from growing and selling crops has allowed her to buy food for her children and a bicycle so that her children can travel to school more easily. *“Now I feel free to do what I have always wanted to do without fear. I want to give my children what their father could not – a safe, loving home. I hope to build a new house for my family using the savings I have made.”*

In response to the increasing instances of domestic violence in Brazil the Anglican Episcopal Church set up the Casa Noeli dos Santos women’s refuge. The refuge provides a safe haven for women and children experiencing domestic violence and enables them to access counselling, legal services and employment opportunities to establish independent lives.

The Church of North India works with people from the Dalit and Adivasi communities who are caught up in the cycle of debt slavery and poverty. They encourage women to join self help groups and set up businesses to lift themselves and their families out of poverty. Lakhibala is a mother who dreamt of providing a good education for her three children and a comfortable life with her husband. Lakhibala was advised by the Church of North India to join one of their self help groups. The group provided a loan and supported Lakhibala to

set up her own saree business. Lakhibala is now a successful businesswoman: *“Whenever there is any function like a wedding or a child’s Annaprasan (ceremony of eating food for the first time), all of my friends call me to help them select what saree to wear and also to tie their sarees”.*

This Lent we pray with our Church partners around the world and support their mission to bring justice to vulnerable people in their local communities. Visit www.uspg.org.uk/lent to find out more and support our Lent Appeal “Living Hope”.



**This Lent,
we pray with
our Church
partners around
the world**

LIVING STONES, LIVING HOPE

The metaphor of the Christian community in 1 Peter 2 as living stones that constitute the household of God is a richly evocative one.

It reminds us not only that we are one among the many stones that make up God's household, but also that we are each connected in a unique way to Jesus Christ, the cornerstone of our faith.

1 Peter, which is the focus text for the Lambeth conference, offers a particular way of connecting the story of Jesus with the story of a particular early Christian community. It touches on Jesus's own experience of rejection as "the stone that the builders rejected" and brings it into conversation with the community's own experiences of persecution. In this bridging of stories, it seeks to open a path for a suffering community to move towards a living hope and performs one of the basic functions of theology which is to reflect on the connection between the God of life and the life of all God's people and God's world.

Theology - a term made up of two Greek words *theos* and *logos*, which mean God and word respectively - means human reflection on God. One of the best-known definitions of theology, offered by St Anselm of Canterbury, understands theology as 'faith seeking understanding' where one grows into a fuller understanding of one's faith. Reflection is therefore intrinsic to

theology. However, no reflection happens in a vacuum. All human thinking is shaped by one's context, though one may not always be conscious of it. Our context and our experiences provide the framework for the questions we ask, the answers we find and the means one uses to navigate between the two. Therefore, all theology is contextual theology.

The awareness that all theology is influenced by its context is a relatively new phenomenon. For a long time, certain forms of theology, especially those that emerged from Western academic sources, were regarded as the 'mainstream' of theology and were thought to be universally relevant.

This was based largely on an assumption that theology has an objective, factual foundation that is not influenced by particular experiences. On this basis, theology is 'done' in a particular way. This assumption failed to recognise that context and experience always influence any theological exploration. The colonial history with which the missionary enterprise was often associated meant that this way of 'doing theology' was regarded as normal throughout the world.

Therefore, when other forms of theology emerged from African, Afro-American, Latin American, Asian and Pacific communities that were explicitly influenced by their context they were described as ‘contextual theology’ and often undermined for failing to follow traditional theological approaches. However, these theologies have helped the global Christian family to understand that theology, by its very nature, is conversational. Theology develops as texts and traditions from the past are brought into conversation with the contexts in which people live their lives and make sense of their faith.

The aim of this study course is to help us understand this conversational approach to theology and see it as a dialogue between the past and the present. In this process two aspects are fundamentally important.

The first is faithfulness to the Gospel, rooted in our scriptural faith tradition. The second is being open to the creative work of the Spirit as we interpret and live out that tradition in ways that are life-giving and life-affirming now. This approach is what Stephen Barton calls ‘creative fidelity.’ It encourages us to understand theology in relation to our practice of faith, as lived theology, theology that is incarnational – rooted in the world – and that, therefore, is challenged by and challenges our context. The various contexts on which this Lent course focuses offer us glimpses of such lived theology. In their diversity, they reflect the many-splendoured stones that constitute the household of God. In the specific stories they tell, they help us discover that our life in God can be lived in more ways than one.

¹ Stephen C. Barton, “The Epistles and Christian Ethics”, in Robin Gill (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Christian Ethics*, 2nd edn., (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), pp.54-64, p.63.



**We are one
among the
many stones
that make up
God’s household**

STUDY 1

AFRICAN WOMEN'S THEOLOGY

We start our course with African Women's Theology, an important strand of what is broadly known as Feminist theology, which encompasses different theological expressions that emerged in response to the struggles of women for justice and equal participation in the life of churches and wider society. Since the word 'feminist' was not considered to be

representative of the challenges women face in specific contexts, different theologies of women's liberation have emerged over the years of which African Women's Theology is one. Others include the womanist theologies of African-American women, the Mujerista theologies of Latina women and the different theologies articulated by Asian and indigenous women.

An important source of African women's theologies has been The Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians, popularly known as The Circle, a pan-African network of women that recognises women as agents of theology, and women's experiences as an important lens to do theology through.

A distinctive contribution of African Women's Theologies have been they way in why they have lifted up storytelling as a theological method. This narrative approach to theology and biblical interpretation draws upon the oral cultures of many African contexts and challenges traditional doctrinal and formulaic ways of understanding theology. By placing one's own story alongside the biblical narratives of God's own intervention in history,

African women seek to engage both with God's word and with their own human worlds in ways that foster visions and actions that are life-enhancing.

There is also a very praxis-based approach to African women's theology that aims for the transformation of patriarchal structures and establishing relations of mutuality. This often involves a creative and critical engagement with the bible, Christian tradition and African culture. African women recognise that these sources of theology can both hold great promise as well as pose problems for women's liberation, and engage with them employing different interpretive strategies like rejection, resistance and recovery in order to foster life and facilitate liberation.

A VIEW FROM ZAMBIA

By Felicia Sakala, Country Director of the Zambia Anglican Council's Outreach Programme (ZACOP)

Loveness Malenga lives in the Diocese of Luapula. She was once married to an abusive man, who physically abused both Loveness and her children. Community leaders alerted the Zambia Anglican Council's Outreach Programme (ZACOP) to the danger Loveness was in and recommended that ZACOP address her situation. ZACOP ensured that Loveness was safe by linking her with their Diocesan Gender Coordinator and subsequently to a trained counsellor. With help from these ZACOP staff members, Loveness resolved not to live with her husband anymore.

ZACOP provided Loveness with a grant, which she used to buy seeds in order to grow crops, which she then sold. The money Loveness earned from selling crops has enabled her to buy food for her children and a bicycle so that her children can travel to school more easily. Loveness has also joined the local community savings groups, which has enabled her to save money. The story of Loveness shows the effect the Church can have in the area of gender justice.

Gender justice is rooted in the biblical story of creation which affirms that God created both men and women in God's image. Justice, dignity, and the overcoming of structures of exclusion and oppression are central to the message of the Gospel. Gender justice and equality prevent violence against women and girls. Societies that value women and men as equal are safer, healthier and likely to be more prosperous too.

To build towards gender justice as a Church we must do things differently. That means shattering the barriers that hold women and girls back. In this regard the Church has an important role in contributing towards the economic security and independence that is necessary for women to make those decisions that could change their future. The Church has a comparative advantage to reach a wider community in mitigating and advocating on gender justice and contributing to policies that would enhance gender justice within and outside the Church.

In communities where the Church in Zambia is implementing mission projects,



we have heard stories of early child marriages. Girls as young as 12 years old are married off for economic gain. Those married to leaders in the Church can't report any form of Gender-Based Violence (GBV) as they do not want to put the name and image of the Church in shame; particularly if the perpetrator was a member of the church leadership. There could also be fear among church members to report issues of GBV to a Priest because of fear of the backlash from other Church members and the community. Some congregants do not trust their priest or

church leaders on GBV-related problems.

The role of men within the Church in promoting gender justice cannot be overemphasized. For example, the Anglican Church in Zambia has organized structures that can be channels for transformation. These include the Anglican Men's Union, Boys Brigade and male clergy networks. These groups can commit themselves to promoting gender equality within the Church by enhancing checks and balances and removing gender disparities.



Justice, dignity and the overcoming of oppression are central to the Gospel

QUESTIONS

- ‘The Church in Zambia today is kept alive by women’. What role do women play in the life of your local church and in the Church as a whole?
- ‘Religions teach equality but subordination or exclusion of women is still in practice’. Is this the case in your church? How can Christians better practice what they preach?
- ‘The role of men within the Church in promoting gender justice cannot be overemphasised’. Are you aware of any initiatives which involve men working for gender justice in your local context? Do you think these initiatives have been effective?

GENESIS 1: 24 - 31

- ²⁴ And God said, ‘Let the earth bring forth living creatures of every kind: cattle and creeping things and wild animals of the earth of every kind.’ And it was so.
- ²⁵ God made the wild animals of the earth of every kind, and the cattle of every kind, and everything that creeps upon the ground of every kind. And God saw that it was good.
- ²⁶ Then God said, ‘Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth.’
- ²⁷ So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.
- ²⁸ God blessed them, and God said to them, ‘Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth.’
- ²⁹ God said, ‘See, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit; you shall have them for food.’
- ³⁰ And to every beast of the earth, and to every bird of the air, and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food.’ And it was so.
- ³¹ God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.

QUESTIONS

- ‘So God created humankind in his image... male and female he created them’. How do you understand this phrase? How can we all be created in God’s image yet be divided into categories?
- What does the idea of everyone being made in God’s likeness mean for society, the Church and yourself?
- How does this passage make you think about justice and equality?

CLOSING PRAYER

Creator God,
 You made us in your image.
 May we be fair and impartial
 In our treatment of others,
 Knowing that they are
 Our siblings in Christ.
 Let us not be bound
 By gender or race,
 And instead remember
 That we are all one in Christ Jesus

ZAMBIA ANGLICAN COUNCIL’S TRANSFORMATIVE GENDER JUSTICE PROGRAMME

The Church in Zambia has been working to combat gender-based violence since 2012 yet the Covid-19 pandemic has left women in Zambia exposed to increased risks. The pandemic has challenged food security, livelihoods, social cohesion, and safety, compounding women’s vulnerability to gender-based violence.

The Transformative Gender Justice Programme works towards strengthening support groups, providing information and promoting knowledge and skills throughout the local community. The programme provides psychosocial support and counselling as well as improving the capacity to advocate and raise awareness on issues related to gender based violence in communities, churches and other local institutions.

Visit www.uspg.org.uk/lent to find out more and support the work of our Church partner in Zambia.

STUDY 2

KOREAN THEOLOGY

From Africa we move to Asia as this session focusses on Christian Theology in Korea. Korean theology sought to engage with the local religious and cultural reality, influenced by Confucianism and Shamanism, as well as its social reality, which was marked by the suffering of the poor.

In many ways it undertook the “double baptism” that the Sri Lankan theologian Aloysius Pieris considered as the defining feature of a relevant Asian Christianity, namely the double baptism in the Jordan of Asian religiosity and the Calvary of Asian poverty.



Some of the early Protestant theologians saw affinities between the Christian notion of God and the supreme lord of Confucianism (sangje: shangti) and employed Korean idioms to translate the Christian faith. However, the best known among Korean theologies is Minjung theology. It took as its starting point the sufferings of the Minjung (a combination of two Chinese characters – min meaning people and jung meaning mass), a generic term implying common people. Parallels were drawn between the Minjung and those who are identified in the gospel of Mark as the ochlos (Greek for people), those on the margins of society with whom Jesus identified himself.

Minjung Theology brought questions of poverty and structural injustice into the life

of the Church in Korea. The Christian gospel, which had love of God and love of neighbour at its core, was interpreted through the frame of liberation and transformation. An important feature of Minjung theology was its recognition that Minjung were the subjects of history. At its heart was the theme of social transformation, of which the Minjung, the unexpected ones, were the agents. It did not objectify oppressed communities as passive victims of injustice, but recognised God's redemptive actions at work in their struggles.

The term Minjung is a fluid and open one. In its choice to identify itself using this term, Minjung theology sought to be a relational theology and align itself with the struggles of other communities worldwide to transform contexts of injustice.

A VIEW FROM THE ANGLICAN CHURCH OF KOREA

By the Rev'd Anthony Gyu-Yong Shim, Diocese of Daejeon

St. Mark's in Yesan has a unique position in the missionary history of the Anglican Church of Korea. When the Church was established in 1917, Yesan had no missionaries or priests. It was established by a lay evangelist, Man-Jun Kim, the younger brother of the first Korean priest in the Anglican Church of Korea.

In the early days, the Church engaged in educational missionary work through kindergartens and schools called 'Shinmyung' and 'Jinmyung,' which means the light of faith and truth. Local people often knew more about the kindergarten than the church because of its long history within the community.

In 2017, during my time at the seminary, I came to St Mark's by chance. When I arrived, I found the door locked. Weeds were growing like a jungle. I looked around, turned around, and tried to get back into the car, but suddenly I was in tears. This church was closing on its 100th anniversary. Nobody came to celebrate. Nobody came to share the joy of the anniversary. I was heartbroken. So, I went back to the seminary and talked to the seminarians. 'It's just an empty church building, but

let's go there and celebrate the 100th anniversary!'

So, on 19th October 2017, we decided to celebrate evening prayers at St Mark's. My colleagues pulled some weeds out from around the church. With the Rt Rev'd Moses Yoo, the Bishop of the Diocese of Daejeon, we sat around the floor of the empty church, lit candles for there was no supply of electricity, and prayed together. At this time, I suggested to Bishop Yoo and other members of Daejeon Diocese that we should try to reopen St. Mark's. Happily, they agreed. The bishop sent me as an evangelist to St. Mark's in February 2019. It was a bit daunting because when I started the services again there were no parishioners, only my family.

I often ask myself 'what can a church do for the local community, not just for the church?'. In addition to the regular tasks of the church, such as the liturgy and caring of the members, we are tasked to connect the church with the local community. I set up a reading group called 'Mark's Bookclub' at the church. Some of the people who came to the reading group had left the

church in the past, some were Anglicans and some were not. Thankfully they all attended the first worship service; and I still remember the emotion of that time.

We also have a programme called 'Shinmyeong Theater', where people come once a month to see a movie and talk about it and we recently started a woodworking class. I am planning a black and white photography club and a Broadcasting Station in Yesan.

In addition, when the government decided that their 'Urban Regeneration New Deal Project' would take place in

the area around St Mark's I was appointed a 'village coordinator' and have been working with the village residents council on the project.

Love for God and love for our neighbours are the main pillars of the Bible. Christianity has a spirituality of hospitality for strangers. I want St. Mark's to be a place that anyone can easily visit. To come, sit and rest; to seek a religious question or answer, or to have a talk over a cup of coffee. St. Mark's is a small church, but I hope it is a significant neighbour in the community. The church needs to shine humble confidence in Jesus.



What can a church do for the local community, not just for the church?

ORIGINAL TEXT FROM KOREA

사순시기 과정 - 한국

심규용 신부와의 인터뷰

예산의 성 마르코 교회는

대한성공회의 역사에서 독특한 위치를 차지하고 있습니다. 1917년 교회가 처음 세워질 때 예산에는 선교사도 목회자도 없었습니다. 성 마르코 교회는 평신도 전도사 김만준이 설립하였는데, 그는 대한성공회 초대 한인 사제의 동생이기도 합니다.

초창기부터 성 마르코 교회는 초창기부터 믿음과 진리의 빛을 의미하는 '신명'이라는 이름의 유치원을 세워 교육 선교를 했습니다. 이렇게 지역 사회 내에서 오랜 역사를 가지고 있기 때문에 지역주민들에게 교회보다 유치원이 더 알려져 있다고 느낄 때가 종종 있습니다.

제가 처음 성 마르코 교회를 처음 와 본 것은 2017년, 신학대학원에 다닐 때였습니다. 도착해 보니 문이 잠겨 있었고 잡초가 정글처럼 자라고 있었습니다. 뒤를 돌아 다시 차에 오르려 하는 순간 갑자기 눈물이 났습니다. 이 교회는 100주년을 맞아 성당도 유치원도 문을 닫았습니다. 축하하러 온 사람은 아무도 없었습니다. 신자수와 유치원생의 감소로 인한 결정이었습니다. 저는 마음이 아팠습니다. 그래서

신학교로 돌아가 신학생들과 이야기를 나눴습니다. '그냥 텅 빈 건물이지만, 거기에 가서 우리가 100주년을 기념하자!'

그렇게 2017년 10월 19일에 성 마르코 교회에서 저녁기도를 하기로 했습니다. 동료들은 함께 교회 주변에서 잡초를 뽑았습니다. 대전교구의 유모세 주교님과 함께 전기가 들어오지 않는 텅 빈 교회 바닥에 촛불을 켜고 둘러앉아 함께 기도했습니다. 저는 유 주교님을 비롯한 대전 교구의 여러 분들께 성 마르코 교회를 다시 열어 보자고 제안했습니다. 다행히 많은 분들이 동의해 주셨습니다. 주교님께서 2019년 2월에 저를 성 마르코 교회에 전도사로 보내 주셨습니다.

저는 종종 '교회가 자신만을 위해서가 아니라 지역사회를 위해서 무엇을 할 수 있을까?' 라고 자문해 봅니다. 전례와 교인 돌봄과 같은 교회의 일상적인 업무 외에도 우리는 교회와 지역사회를 연결하는 임무를 맡고 있습니다. 저는 교회에 '마르코 북클럽'이라는 독서 동아리를 만들었습니다. 독서 모임에 온 사람들 중 일부는 과거에 교회를 떠났던 사람들도 있고, 일부는 성공회 신자였고 일부는 그렇지 않았습니다. 감사하게도 그들은 첫 예배에 참석했습니다. 저는 그 때의 감격을 아직도 기억합니다.

그 외에 ‘신명 극장’이라는 프로그램도 시작했는데 한 달에 한 번 영화를 보고 이야기를 나누는 모임입니다. 유치원을 활용한 목공 교실도 시작했으며, 몇 개의 동아리들도 만들었습니다. 안타깝게도 현재 코로나 바이러스로 성당과 모임이 문을 닫았습니다. 그러나 이 기간 동안 성당의 부속 공간을 활용한 마을 책방을 꾸미는 공사를 하고 있습니다. 이 공간은 사람과 책을 연결합니다. 보다 많은 문화행사들을 통해 지역적 연대감을 높이고 사람들이 성당을 더 많이 이용할 수 있게 하려는 것입니다.

최근 정부가 성 마르코 교회 주변 지역에서 ‘도시 재생 뉴딜 사업’을 추진하기로 결정하였고 저는 ‘마을 코디네이터’로 임명되어

주민협의회와 함께 이 사업을 돕고 있습니다. 교회와 지역은 함께 발전해야 하는 공동운명체이기에 지역의 일에 적극 참여하고 있습니다.

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QUESTIONS

- In this story, Rev'd Anthony asks, 'What can a church do for the local community, not just for the church?'. How do you view the relationship between church and community, and what can you do for your community?
- What new ideas can you think of to engage further with your local community?
- How can your church embody 'hospitality for strangers'?

LUKE 10: 25-37

- ²⁴ Just then a lawyer stood up to test Jesus. 'Teacher,' he said, 'what must I do to inherit eternal life?'
- ²⁶ He said to him, 'What is written in the law? What do you read there?'
- ²⁷ He answered, 'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbour as yourself.'
- ²⁸ And he said to him, 'You have given the right answer; do this, and you will live.'
- ²⁹ But wanting to justify himself, he asked Jesus, 'And who is my neighbour?'
- ³⁰ Jesus replied, 'A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell into the hands of robbers, who stripped him, beat him, and went away, leaving him half dead.'
- ³¹ Now by chance a priest was going down that road; and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side.'
- ³² So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side.'
- ³³ But a Samaritan while travelling came near him; and when he saw him, he was moved with pity.'
- ³⁴ He went to him and bandaged his wounds, having poured oil and wine on them. Then he put him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him.'
- ³⁵ The next day he took out two denarii, gave them to the innkeeper, and said, 'Take care of him; and when I come back, I will repay you whatever more you spend.'
- ³⁶ Which of these three, do you think, was a neighbour to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers?'
- ³⁷ He said, 'The one who showed him mercy.' Jesus said to him, 'Go and do likewise.'

QUESTIONS

- Jesus ends the parable by asking, “which of these three, do you think, was a neighbour to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers?” Who are the Good Samaritans in our own context? What can we learn from them?
- In your context, what would it mean to ‘fall into the hands of robbers’?
- What is the role of mercy in the life of the Church? How can we be more merciful?

CLOSING PRAYER

Encouraging God,
You bring light to the darkness
And presence to empty places.
May we be emboldened by you
To connect with and open up to our local communities.
Let us show hospitality to the stranger,
And love to our neighbours, known and unknown.

STUDY 3

LIBERATION THEOLOGY

From Asia we move to Latin America and explore Liberation theology, which in many ways revolutionised the landscape of Christian theology. With its origins in the Latin American situation of poverty, Liberation theology denounced any form of theological engagement that was

abstract and estranged from human experience. The starting point of Liberation theology was a “preferential option for the poor”. This meant doing theology from the perspective of the poor and with a commitment to their liberation.

Gustavo Gutiérrez, one of the pioneers of liberation theology, defines it as “reflection on practice in the light of faith”. For Gutierrez the first act of theology is putting God’s will into practice. This is followed by the second act of reasoning which helps us engage with the question, “How to proclaim the God of life to people who suffer premature and unjust deaths?”

What distinguished Latin American liberation theology from other theologies of liberation was its rootedness in the life of the Church. Not only was it embraced by the Roman Catholic church in Latin America, but it was also rooted in the life and witness of grassroots Christian communities known as the base ecclesial communities (CEBs - *Comunidade Eclesial de Base* in Portuguese), especially in Brazil.

Crucial to liberation theology was Christian participation in the process of liberation through solidarity. To facilitate participation in liberation, various tools from social analysis were used to understand poverty as structural injustice and safeguard Christians from complicity with such unjust structures. However, liberation was not just understood as political and social liberation that focussed on the elimination of structural injustice but also as human liberation that focussed on the protection of human dignity and liberation from selfishness and sin. In this, liberation theology asserted its holistic dimension as one way in which the alternate values of God’s reign of justice, peace and joy can be made present in the midst of systematic exclusion, exploitation and death.



A VIEW FROM THE IGREJA EPISCOPAL ANGLICANA DO BRASIL

‘What are you discussing together as you walk along?’ This question in Luke 24:17 reflects one of the pillars of theological reflection in Latin America. The context: our body, our geographical and geopolitical place, and our planet. It is from this context that theological reflection emerges and forms. Our language about God and God’s revelation is marked by each step ‘as we walk along’. We step with our feet, our head thinks, and our heart loves (acts). This method is practiced by Liberation Theologies in Latin America and is responsible for a process of critically reading the Bible and our reality. God dwells among us and it is in this God-inhabited world that we experience God’s grace and seek to fulfil God’s plan of the kingdom. God always calls us into a new moment, and God calls us to be a physical expression (to reveal his glory) of his transforming grace. For God asks us to ‘practice righteousness, love goodness, and walk humbly with him’ (Micah 6:8) and that we should always be ready to defend the most vulnerable people (Isaiah 1) and listen to the groans of creation (Romans 8). God called the Rev’d Elineide Ferreira

Oliveira, a black woman, the daughter of a single mother, sister of four women educated to be strong in the face of many inequalities that women experience in their daily journey.

She gives her testimony of how this way of doing theology and being faithful to both context and to God formed her ministry:

I am an Anglican priest and act pastorally in the Missionary District in the region of Rondônia, a part of the Amazon. I coordinate the diaconal service of receiving women from situations of violence into the Noeli dos Santos Support House. All my experience: pastoral, spiritual and professional, along with a degree in social service, have their roots in Liberation Theology. This forms what I believe and practice in the community: that we must go to meet those who are untouchable or invisible. This thinking and practice of living the Gospel is the interpretation that Liberation Theology offers us: it encourages us to leave our comfort zone and do all that we can. This method of doing theology continually provokes me not to conform (cf. Romans 12:1-2) but rather to seek ways to act for those in most need, and never to be a person who

simply wants to be neutral in situations of injustice. As Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu says, 'If you are neutral in situations of injustice you choose the oppressor's side.'

Thus I have strengthened and nourished myself by interpreting the teachings of Jesus Christ as liberator of unjust social, political, and economic conditions. I believe in a God of love and mercy who makes no distinction between his sons and daughters (Acts 10:34). I profess a faith in a God who prides himself on good practice (Jeremiah 9:24) guaranteeing

each person's right without hurting the right of the other; sowing good seed for all, without distinguishing with whom.

This God, the source of love to ourselves and our neighbour, is asking us to follow him in this path (cf. Luke 10.25-37; Matthew 22.39; Leviticus 19.18). This is the core of liberation theology. It nurtures our "good side", which is to seek living in harmony with the universe, rather than creating hatred and inequality. This is the God I follow and believe.



**We must go to
meet those who
are untouchable
or invisible**

ORIGINAL TEXT FROM BRAZIL

‘Do que vocês estão falando no caminho?’. Essa pergunta em Lucas 24:17 reflete um dos pilares da elaboração teológica que se faz na América Latina: o contexto: do corpo pessoal, do território geográfico e geopolítico e do planeta. É a partir do contexto que a reflexão teológica emerge e se forma. A linguagem sobre Deus e sua revelação é marcada por onde pisam os pés. Onde pisam os pés, a cabeça pensa e o coração ama (age). Esse método praticado pelas Teologias da Libertação em terras latino-americanas é responsável pelos processos de leitura crítica da realidade e da Bíblia. Deus habita entre nós e é nesse mundo habitado que experimentamos sua graça e procuramos cumprir seu projeto do Reino. Deus chama a gente pra um momento novo sempre, e chama para sermos uma expressão física (revelar sua glória) da sua graça transformadora. Pois Deus nos pede que ‘pratique a justiça, ames a bondade e andas humildemente com ele’ (Miquéias 6.8) e que sempre estejamos prontas para defender as pessoas mais vulneráveis (Is 1) e escutarmos os gemidos da criação (Rom 8).

Deus chamou a Reverenda Elineide Ferreira Oliveira, mulher

negra, filha de mãe solo, irmã de quatro mulheres educadas para serem mulheres fortes para enfrentam a vida de muitas desigualdades que as mulheres vivenciam em sua jornada diária.

Ela dá seu testemunho de como esse jeito de fazer teologia e de ser fiel ao seu contexto e a Deus formou seu ministério:

Eu sou reverenda e atuo pastoralmente no Distrito Missionário na região de Rondônia, região norte do Brasil dentro da Amazonia Legal, e coordeno o serviço diaconal de acolhimento a mulheres em situação de violência da Casa de apoio Noeli dos Santos. Toda minha vivencia, prática pessoal, pastoral, espiritual e profissional, sou formada em serviço social, tem suas raízes na teologia da libertação, se encaixa no que acredito conforme minha pratica e experiencia em comunidade, que devemos ir ao encontro de quem está margem e invisibilizada/o. É fazer-se presente como voz profética dos ensinamentos de Deus, não somente dentro de nossos templos mas fora dele, colocando na pratica a teoria conforme entendimento dos ensinamentos de Deus diante ao que ouvimos e aprendemos nas homilias em nossas comunidades. Esta concepção

e forma de viver o evangelho de Deus, é a melhor interpretação que a teologia da libertação nos oferta e nos encoraja a sair de nossa zona de conforto a fazer o que ao nosso alcance. Esse método de fazer teologia me provoca continuamente a não me conformar (cf Rom 12.1-2) e a buscar mecanismos para agir em favor de quem mais necessita e nunca ser uma pessoa que pretende ser NEUTRA em situações de injustiça. Como diz o Arcebispo Emérito Desmond Rutu ‘Se você fica neutro em situações de injustiça você escolhe o lado do opressor’.

Assim tenho me fortalecido e alimentado através desta corrente de pensamentos interpretando ensinamentos de Jesus Cristo como libertadores de injustas condições sociais, políticas e econômicas.

Acredito em um Deus de amor, misericórdia que não faz distinção entre seus filhos e filhas (Atos 10.34). Professo a fé em um Deus que se orgulha das boas práticas (Jeremias 9.24) garantindo nosso direito sem ferir o direito do outro, utilizando da ação da boa sementeira, semeando o bem sem olhar a quem.

Este Deus, fonte de amor para nós mesmos e para nosso próximo, nos pede que o sigamos neste caminho (cf. Lucas 10.25-37; Mateus 22.39; Levítico 19.18). Este é também o núcleo de nosso discurso religioso conhecido como teologia da libertação. Ela propõe e alimenta nosso “lado bom”, que é procurar viver em harmonia com o universo, e não fomentar o ódio e a desigualdade. Este é o Deus que eu sigo e acredito.

QUESTIONS

- How can we walk alongside the most vulnerable in society?
- Rev'd Elineide Ferreira Oliveira discusses how liberation theology pushes her out of her comfort zone. How does theology challenge you and your way of life?
- Rev'd Elineide describes Jesus as a 'liberator'. What do you think needs to be liberated in our society, our church and ourselves?

MICAH 6: 1 - 8

- ¹ Hear what the Lord says: Rise, plead your case before the mountains, and let the hills hear your voice.
- ² Hear, you mountains, the controversy of the Lord, and you enduring foundations of the earth; for the Lord has a controversy with his people, and he will contend with Israel.
- ³ 'O my people, what have I done to you? In what have I wearied you? Answer me!
- ⁴ For I brought you up from the land of Egypt, and redeemed you from the house of slavery; and I sent before you Moses, Aaron, and Miriam.
- ⁵ O my people, remember now what King Balak of Moab devised, what Balaam son of Beor answered him, and what happened from Shittim to Gilgal, that you may know the saving acts of the Lord.'
- ⁶ 'With what shall I come before the Lord and bow myself before God on high? Shall I come before him with burnt-offerings, with calves a year old?
- ⁷ Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, with tens of thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?'
- ⁸ He has told you, O mortal, 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?'

QUESTIONS

- In this passage, we hear of prayer as 'pleading your case before the mountains, and letting the hills hear your voice'. What are you passionate about that makes you turn to God in prayer?
- How can you 'do justice, love kindness and walk humbly' in your local context?

- Think about how you can 'walk humbly' not only alongside God, but alongside your neighbours - both in your community and across the world church.

CLOSING PRAYER

Liberator God,
Guide us along a righteous path.
Lift the burden from our shoulders,
Clear our minds and fill our hearts with love.
May we walk with the vulnerable
And sow seeds of goodness wherever we go.
Let us pursue justice, peace and harmony.

THE ANGLICAN EPISCOPAL CHURCH OF BRAZIL: CASA NOELI WOMEN'S REFUGE

With the increasing number of cases of domestic violence against women in Brazil, the Anglican Episcopal Church of Brazil committed to work with local authorities to set up a refuge centre for women experiencing violence in the home. In 2011, the Church opened Casa Noeli dos Santos women's refuge as a safe haven for women in situations of violence together with their children. For reasons of security women are referred to Casa Noeli through the police and various social service agencies. Once there they can access psychosocial care, counselling, legal support, vocational courses, employment support and referrals to the care network.

Visit www.uspg.org.uk/lent to find out more and support the work of our Church partner in Brazil.

STUDY 4

CELTIC SPIRITUALITY

From Latin America we move to the context of the United Kingdom and Ireland and focus on the Celtic Christianity that emerged in the early Middle Ages in Celtic countries. Despite the diversity of Celtic churches today, which renders the idea of a homogenous Celtic church difficult, it might still be possible to speak of Celtic spirituality as a set of distinctive features that bind these churches

together. For many Christians globally some of the best known Celtic spiritual resources might arguably be the symbol of the Celtic Cross and St Patrick's Breastplate, a prayer for protection usually attributed to Saint Patrick. These symbols capture the world-embracing nature of Celtic spirituality and the importance of pilgrimage within Celtic Christianity.



Celtic spirituality is considered to be influenced by many traditions including the pagan and the monastic traditions beyond the Celtic context. It is a good example of the intercultural nature of Christian spirituality. There is a strong, life-affirming dimension to Celtic spirituality that is based on an incarnational theology of God embracing the world. This life-affirming dimension emerges in the way in which Celtic spirituality affirms the sacredness of the ordinary. Such affirmation can also be linked to the sacramental vision of the Celts that perceives God in and through all creation. This vision finds resonances in the biblical tradition through the idea of God's immanence in the world.

Oliver Davies identifies the following as important characteristic features of

Celtic spirituality: the strongly incarnational character of its theology, the appearance of nature as a dominant theme without being objectified as a means to serve human ends, an emphasis on human creativity and imagination, and a positive and empowering portrayal of women. According to Davies, theologically these different characteristics, "find a unity in the centrality of the doctrine of the Trinity, which profoundly shaped the religious imagination of the early Celtic peoples." There is potential in these characteristics of Celtic spirituality not just to engage with some of the important challenges that we face today as human beings, but also to encounter the divine in the midst of, and despite, these challenges in the mundane and the marginal.

A VIEW FROM THE CHURCH OF IRELAND

By Canon Patrick Comerford, Priest-in-Charge of the Rathkeale Group of parishes, and Director for Education and Training in the Diocese of Limerick and Killaloe

The Church of Ireland is quite different to many other member churches in the Anglican Communion: we are a cross-border church, geographically embracing both the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland. Four of the eleven dioceses are cross-border dioceses and some benefices even find themselves on both sides of the border. Half of the Church finds itself in the European Union; half the Church is within the United Kingdom. The social problems that have resulted are far more – and far deeper – than the variety of goods on supermarket shelves, or the different expectations in health care and education. Brexit has created problems and divisions across the island that pose the greatest challenges since the peace agreements of the 1990s.

The challenges and opportunities in mission for the Church of Ireland today are many and set within a context that is both fluid and unpredictable. Apart from daily fears about the return of political and sectarian violence, all the churches on the island are facing challenging questions about cultural and political

diversity and cross-community respect. Any cross-community conversation is in danger of losing trust and respect because of underlying fears of sectarianism, memories of violence, and agendas that remain without articulation.

In the Republic of Ireland, the changes in culture and values reflect a changing society: Irish is no longer the second language, having ceded place to Polish and Chinese; by popular referendum, and not by legislation, the people have voted for equal marriage and changes in abortion law; the Churches have lost the public trust and authority they once had not just through growing secularism, but as a consequence of scandals and stories of abuse. The political agenda is overwhelmed by concerns for housing, homelessness and health care. A far-right lobby is vocal in opposing immigration and public vaccination programmes, and gives voice to racism, xenophobia, Islamophobia and anti-Semitism; it may be small at present, but its presence is worrying.

In the south-west of Ireland, being remote does not

isolate my parish from these experiences. The credibility of the church is fading, yet it needs to be heard speaking out on the issues of the day, and speaking out for the vulnerable, the marginalised, the neglected and the minorities.

In one small example of applying our understanding of ‘the stone that the builders rejected,’ the three main churches in West Limerick have sponsored a project to create understanding and a shared space for Travellers, who are a large ethnic minority in the area, and the people of Rathkeale, who fear losing their social, economic and cultural place in the town. As the Church

takes stock once again, it needs to be less worried about how it is perceived or whether it is losing credibility, and more willing to engage with these questions, even when this is costly.

Therefore, we need to rid ourselves of ‘all malice, and all guile, insincerity, envy and all slander’ (verse 1). Instead of worrying about our survival, our finances or our structures, we need to place our trust in Christ, ‘a living stone ... rejected by mortals’ (1 Peter 2: 4), so that we may invite the people into ‘a spiritual house’ and become part of ‘a holy priesthood, a holy nation, God’s own people’ (verses 5, 9).



We are a cross-border church, geographically embracing both the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland

QUESTIONS

- What are the main political and social issues in your parish or local area? Is your church united in its response to these issues?
- What are the borders, visible or invisible, between different sections of your community?
- In what ways does your church enable the voices of the vulnerable to be heard?

1 PETER 2: 1-10

- ¹ Rid yourselves, therefore, of all malice, and all guile, insincerity, envy, and all slander.
- ² Like newborn infants, long for the pure, spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow into salvation—
- ³ if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is good.
- ⁴ Come to him, a living stone, though rejected by mortals yet chosen and precious in God's sight, and
- ⁵ like living stones, let yourselves be built into a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.
- ⁶ For it stands in scripture: 'See, I am laying in Zion a stone, a cornerstone chosen and precious; and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame.'
- ⁷ To you then who believe, he is precious; but for those who do not believe, 'The stone that the builders rejected has become the very head of the corner',
- ⁸ and 'A stone that makes them stumble, and a rock that makes them fall.' They stumble because they disobey the word, as they were destined to do.
- ⁹ But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people, in order that you may proclaim the mighty acts of him who called you out of darkness into his marvellous light.
- ¹⁰ Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

QUESTIONS

- Who comes to mind when you think of “the stones that the builder rejected”? How can you better include them in church life?
- We’re called to be ‘living stones revealing a living hope’? What does that mean for the world today?
- “Once you were not a people, but now you are God’s people”. What does this mean for you as a church?

CLOSING PRAYER

Almighty God,
No border can limit your love and mercy.
You reach the most remote of places
And the unlikeliest of people.
May we emulate your generosity,
Loving and respecting all around us.
Help us to build community, trust and dignity.
Teach us to be living stones.

STUDY 5

DALIT THEOLOGY

Our final session explores Dalit theology, a theology of liberation that takes as its starting point the experiences of suffering of the Dalit communities, who were previously

known as 'untouchables' under the Indian caste system. It emerged in the 1980s as a response to the continued discrimination of the Dalits both in society and within Indian churches.

Identity affirmation and socio-political liberation are at the heart of Dalit theology. James Massey, a pioneering Dalit theologian from North India, describes Dalit theology as a theology which will help Dalits “in their search for daily bread and their struggle to overcome a situation of oppression, injustice and denial of human dignity and identity.” Therefore, Dalit theology seeks to affirm Dalit identity and culture, while seeking to transform the structures that oppress them by ascribing notions of pollution and inferiority to them. Symbols like the Dalit drum, dalit folk songs and community practices that were previously elided or considered polluting are reclaimed as means and sources of Christian theologising, as they provide a rich narrative of God’s participation and action in and through the life of the Dalit communities.

Dalit theology also makes use of different biblical models of God. On the one hand, in the biblical images of the suffering



servant found in Isaiah, and the crucified Christ who experiences god-forsakenness on the cross, Dalits see God becoming one of them and speak of a ‘Dalit God’. On the other hand, they also embrace the liberator God who leads an enslaved people out of slavery and oppression in the book of Exodus, and the Jesus of the gospels who through his acts of healing and table fellowship subverts structures that exclude and discriminate against the marginalised. In these models they find empowerment to persist in their struggles for justice and fullness of life.

A VIEW FROM THE CHURCH OF NORTH INDIA

Ramu is crying, because he is not allowed to play with other children. His mother is not allowed to fetch water from the community well. Ramu's father is trapped in a debt cycle because of a nominal loan he has taken for his daughter; he has no source to repay the loan other than his labour. Two arms and a leg is the price this Dalit father paid to get justice for his gang-raped daughter. Some stories of Dalits are voiced and many more are left untold.

There are approximately 230 million Dalits living in India. Considered 'outcastes' these communities suffer systematic exclusion and discrimination under the caste system, a system of social stratification which ranks communities hierarchically on the basis of origin and occupation. Dalits are considered as 'untouchables' even though the Indian constitution prohibits untouchability. 'Untouchability' refers to the imposition of social disabilities on persons by reason of their birth into certain castes. As a result Dalits have been systematically excluded from mainstream development and their representation in India's well-paid industries is dismal. However, jobs considered to be polluting like manual scavenging, garbage collection and tending

to cremation grounds are generally set apart for them as a way of perpetuating their marginalization on the basis of notions of purity and pollution. Caste divisions and hierarchy are reinforced through the practice and threat of social exclusion, economic boycotts, and physical violence. Added to this, Dalit women are particularly vulnerable to sexual violence.

The Church of North India's (CNI) Mission Statement is very focused on the plight of marginalised people. It aims 'to restore the integrity of God's creation through continuous struggle against the demonic powers by breaking down the barriers of caste, class, gender, economic inequality and exploitation of nature.'

It is inspired by the recognition that the gospel of Christ is the gospel of Liberation, which empowers the poor and the oppressed to liberate themselves from all forms of enslavement and realise their full potential. Since 2015, CNI in co-operation with USPG has been working for the emancipation of Dalit and Tribal communities across various Dioceses. The initiative called 'Let my People Go' is inspired by Moses's demand for the liberation of the Israelites and the story of their freedom from

enslavement through God's empowerment.

When God is the creator of all humans, the good news of God's reign should be good to all human beings. Through this program, Dalit brothers and sisters are engaged in income-generation activities to raise their family income, as a result of which their children can afford education and proper nutrition that can help break the chains of casteism. Further, Dalit communities are provided easy

access to clean drinking water and proper sanitation. This goes a long way in preventing sexual violence against women and young girls, who otherwise are likely to be attacked when they walk long distances beyond their dwellings to fetch water. Overall, the programme has been enabling congregations to engage in Jesus' mission to take up action in solidarity with oppressed communities to bring a ray of hope to their lives and smiles to their faces.



**The gospel
of Christ is
the gospel of
Liberation,
which
empowers the
poor and the
oppressed**

ORIGINAL TEXT FROM INDIA

रामू अन्य बच्चों के साथ शामिल होकर नहीं खेल पा रहा था, और एक और मैदान के किनारे बबूल के पेड़ के नीचे बैठ कर मोटी मोटी आंसूओं के साथ ससिकियाँ ले रहा था पर फरि भी कोई भी बच्चा उससे बुला कर खेल में शामिल नहीं कर रहा था, क्यूंकि दूसरे बच्चों के साथ उसे खेलने अनुमत नहीं थी। उसकी माँ भी अन्य महिलाओं की तरह अपने गहर आँगन में स्वतंत्र रूप से एक दूसरे से बात करते और मलि जलि कर काम नहीं कर सकती थी और ना ही उसे गाँव के कुंवे का पानी नकालने की अनुमत नहीं थी जब तक कपूरे गाँव की महिलाएं पानी भर कर खतम न कर लेती और चली जाती। रामू के पिता क्रूरज के चक्रव्यू में फंसे है। घर पर बड़ी मुश्किल से सुख की रोटी जुगाड कर पाता था क्यूंकि अपनी बेटी के साथ हुए सामूहिक दुष्कर्म पर न्याय पाने के लिए थाना और कोर्ट के चक्कर लगाने के सलिसलि में बड़ी रकम उधार लिए हुए है। काम के तौर पर दहिाड़ी मजदूरी कर नरिभर है, जिसमें भी महीने के आदी दनि कोर्ट और कचहरी के चक्कर लगाने में दनि नकिल रहे थे और एक ओर उधार का बोझ बढ़ता जा रहा था। उसकी बेटी के साथ सामूहिक दुष्कर्म के बाद, आसपास और खुद के गाँव के लोग रामू के परविार को हीन नज़रों से देखने लगे। जात से तो दलति था ही पर इस घटना के बाद उसका पूरा परविार और भी टूट गया था। आसपास लोगों ने काम देना बंद कर दिया। महिलाएं रामू की माँ से बात करना बंद कर दी। भेदभाव का अनुभव और भी बढ़ने लग रहा था। राशन की दूकान में उधार मलिना बंद हो गया, और हर दनि पूरा परविार अपनी बेटी के साथ हुए घटना की न्याय के लिए दर दर भटक रहा था। रामू के पिता के पास और कोई भी साधन नहीं है जिससे कविह लोन चुका सके सविय मजदूरी की कमाई। इस

दलति पिता ने अपनी बेटी के साथ हुए घटना के लिए जो कीमत चुकाई, ऐसी कुछ ही हादसों को आवाज़ दी जाती है और कई अनकही ही रह जाती है।

हासयि पर खड़ा दलति समाज आज भी भेदभाव का शकिार हो रहा है। आज लगभगभारत की आबादी का 16.6 % आबादी दलति है। और इन्हीं प्रकार की परस्थितियों से रोज़ जुझते हैं और हर दनि वो अछूत माने जाते हैं, जौभी कि भारतीय संवधान में छुआछूत को लेकर ऐसा कोई वविरण नहीं है और ना ही संवधान इससे बढ़ावा देती है बल्कि भारत का संवधान उद्देशिका में इस बात पर प्रकाश डालती और कहती है: “हम भारत के लोग भारत को एक सम्पूर्ण परभुतवा संपन्न, समाजवादी पंथ नरिपेक्ष लोकतंत्रात्मक गणराज्य बनाने के लिए तथा उसके समस्त नागरिकों को सामजकि, आर्थकि, और राजनैतकि न्याय, वचिार, अभवियक्ति, वशिवास, धर्म और उपासना की स्वतंत्रता, प्रतषिठा और औसर कि समता प्रापूत करने के लिए तथा उन सब में, व्यक्ती की गरमि और राष्ट्र की एकता और अखंडता सुनश्चिति करने वाली बन्धुता बढ़ाने के लिए दृढ संकल्प है।” ये पक्तियाँ इस बात को प्रमाणति करती हैं कि भारत के संवधान की नजर में भी हर नागरकि सामाजकि स्तर पर एक सामान है।

“छुआछूत” –कुछ जातियों में जन्म से ही उनकी अक्षमताओं पर आरोपण कविया जाता है। जोकि हमारे समाज में एक कठोर सामाजकि स्तरीकरण और एक खोखली पारंपरकि पद्धतको दर्शाती है। कुछ गतविधियों का अमलीकरण जैसे, सामाजकि, आर्थकि बहिषकार और शारीरकि शोषण, जातिया वभिजन को मजबूत करता जा रहा है। आज भारत में

महिलाएं वशिष्ठ तौर से शारीरिक हिसा का शक्ति हैं। भारत में उच्चस्तारयिा उद्योगों में दलतियों का प्रदर्शन नरिशपूरण है, उनका काम और नौकरियों साफ सफाई के स्तर का ही होता है। दलतियों को बहुत ही व्यवस्थित तरीके से मुख्यधारा के विकास से बाहर रखा गया है। मौके भी ऐसे आते हैं कि वो ऊपर उठे पर उन्हें हमेशा ही दबाया जाता है।

मसीह का सुसमाचार मुक्ति का सुसमाचार है, जिससे कलोग, मानवीयकरण का प्रथम वाहक होने के नाते गरीबी और उत्पीडन जैसी सभी प्रकार की दासता से खुद को मुक्त करते हैं। सुसमाचार से लोगों को, समुदायों को, राष्ट्रों को, खुद की क्षमताओं को महसूस करने, समझने में मदद मिलती है।

चर्च ऑफ़ नार्थ इंडिया (सी.एन.आई) मशिन का कथन इस पर केन्द्रित है कि वह हाशिए पर खड़े लोगों की दुर्दशा को दर्शाता है। और इस बात का समर्थन करता है कि, “जाति, वर्ग, लिंग, आर्थिक असमानता, प्रकृतिक शोषण की बाधाओं को तोड़ कर, नरितर संघर्ष के माध्यम से, ईश्वरकी रचना की अखंडता को बहाल करते रहना”

वर्ष 2015 से सी.एन.आई. एस.बी. एस.एस, यूएसपीजी के सहयोग से वभिनि धर्मप्रदेश में दलति और आद्विासी समुदायों की मुक्ति के लिए काम कर रही है। यह पहल “ मेरी प्रजा को जाने दो” कहलाती है, जो क प्रेरति

है मूसा नबी की आज्ञा से, कजिो इस्राएलियों को मुक्त करने और उन्हें परमेश्वर के अधिकार के साथ वादा किए गए देश ले जाने से है। जब परमेश्वर सभी मनुष्यों की रचना करने वाला है, तो परमेश्वर के राज्य का शुभ समाचार सभी मनुष्यों के लिए के लिए। परमेश्वर लोगों को जाति और धर्म में बाटने नहीं आया है बल्कि दिवे कुचले और नसिहाय, को मुक्ति दिलाने आया है। “मेरी प्रजा को जाने दो” कार्यक्रम के माध्यम से, दलति भाई बहन अपनी पारिवारिक आय बढ़ाने के लिए आय सृजन गतिविधियों में लगे हुए हैं। फलस्वरूप आज उनके बच्चे विद्यालयों में जाते हैं और उचित शिक्षा और साथ में पोषण आहार ग्रहण कर रहे हैं। उनके पास बनिा कसिी भेदभाव के स्वच्छ पेय योग्य पानी और स्वच्छता पहुँच रही है। कोविड -19 महामारी के दौरान चर्च ने उनके समुदाय को सूखा राशन की राहत एवं उनके खर्चों में सहयोग प्रदान की थी। यह कार्यक्रम बड़े पैमाने पर, मण्डली को यीशु में शामिल होने के लिए सक्रम बना रही है। ताकि एकजुटता से पीड़ित परिवारों के लिए कार्यवाई की जा सके और उनके चेहरे पर आशा की करिण और मुस्कान लायी जा सके।

एक न्यायपूर्ण समाज वह समाज है जिसमें सम्मान की भावना और अवमाननाकी भावना एक दयालू समाज की नीव में घुल जाती है- डॉ. बी. आर आंबेडकर, [जाति का वनिाश]

QUESTIONS

- Reflecting on the ‘untouchability’ of the Dalits, what forms of discrimination do you see in your own context?
- Dalit theology is theology by the Dalits for their own liberation. Do you see similar theologies emerging from your local context?
- ‘When God is the creator of all humans, the good news of God’s reign should be good to all human beings’. We are called to proclaim good news, but what is good news to Dalit communities, other oppressed communities and our own community?

EXODUS 6: 2-7

- ² God also spoke to Moses and said to him: ‘I am the Lord.
- ³ I appeared to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob as God Almighty, but by my name ‘The Lord’ I did not make myself known to them.
- ⁴ I also established my covenant with them, to give them the land of Canaan, the land in which they resided as aliens.
- ⁵ I have also heard the groaning of the Israelites, whom the Egyptians are holding as slaves, and I have remembered my covenant.
- ⁶ Say therefore to the Israelites, ‘I am the Lord, and I will free you from the burdens of the Egyptians and deliver you from slavery to them. I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with mighty acts of judgement.
- ⁷ I will take you as my people, and I will be your God. You shall know that I am the Lord your God, who has freed you from the burdens of the Egyptians.

QUESTIONS

- The passage paints a picture of a God who suffers with his people and carries them through their afflictions. How does that compare with your understanding of God?
- God hears the ‘groaning of the Israelites’. How does this make you feel about the way in which you communicate with God?
- In this passage, God promises “I will redeem you with an outstretched arm”. What does redemption mean like for the world today, for the Church and for ourselves?

CLOSING PRAYER

Empowering God,
 Lift up the vulnerable and the victimised.
 Break the chains of discrimination and prejudice,
 And set your people free.
 Let us stand in solidarity with the oppressed,
 Hear their stories and lighten their load.
 May we all be rays of hope in a broken world.

THE CHURCH OF NORTH INDIA: LET MY PEOPLE GO - FREEING TRIBAL COMMUNITIES FROM POVERTY & DEBT SLAVERY

In some regions of North India, people from the Dalit and Adivasi tribes are caught up in the drudgery of forced labour, they face long hours, low pay and many hardships due to extreme poverty.

The Church of North India's Let My People Go programme has been effective in supporting marginalised communities to break free from debt slavery and poverty to become self-sustaining in the long-term. The Church has played a crucial role in increasing household income by mobilising women in rural areas through self-help groups. Women in North India's Dalit and Adivasi tribal communities are becoming leading symbols of empowerment through their economic independence, inspiring and encouraging others to follow suit.

Visit www.uspg.org.uk/lent to find out more and support the work of our Church partner in North India.



THANK YOU

With your support we have been able to help fund the vital work of our global Church partners. Here are some of their achievements over the past year.

CHURCH OF NORTH INDIA

Let My People Go programme

- 12,000 community members and children in 78 villages participated in a national campaign for creating rural schools
- 1,804 households benefitted from drinking water and sanitation work in Barrackpore and awareness training on environment and waste disposal
- Strengthening of self-help groups in Barrackpore and Amritsar
- 19 men and 129 women took part in alternative livelihoods training and issue based workshops to strengthen the community and empower them to address local issues

ZAMBIA ANGLICAN COUNCIL

Transformative Gender Justice Programme

- 24 gender-based violence drama outreach performances were conducted reaching 3,818 people
- 1,582 households have been visited for door-to-door sensitisation visits
- 3,474 survivors of gender-based violence were provided with counselling services (2497 females and 977 males)

Thank you for standing in solidarity with the world Church, your support is helping our partners life changing work. Thank you.

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Please return to: USPG, 5 Trinity Street, London SE1 1DB

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THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT



USPG AND YOUR CHURCH

We live in a broken and unequal world. This cries out for words and actions that express solidarity and show God's love. Will you join with churches across the world in their mission of transforming lives through education, health care and justice for all?

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USPG is the Anglican mission agency that partners churches and communities worldwide in God's mission to enliven faith, strengthen relationships, unlock potential and champion justice. Founded 1701.

USPG has three strategic aims: Rethinking Mission, Energising Church and Community and Championing Justice. We bring people together from different parts of the global Church in mutually enriching conversation and profound encounters, to deepen faith in Jesus Christ. We strive to make connections between the churches of the Anglican Communion to deepen bonds of affection and learn from each other in rich exchange. We promote education and leadership and strengthen the unity and capacity of the Anglican Church. We also accompany Anglican churches across the world as they form communities of hope and resistance in the struggles associated with climate change, migration, gender, the human rights of indigenous people and inter-religious living.

If you would like to find out more about USPG or perhaps get involved as a volunteer, please visit our website www.uspg.org.uk

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