



THE UNITING
PRESBYTERIAN
CHURCH
IN SOUTHERN
AFRICA

**LINKING ALL IN THE UPCSA
TOGETHER**

Easter Edition

Love

Hope

Mercy

**Only through our
Lord and Saviour,
Jesus Christ**



UPCSA YOUTH DESK



No-one predicted the coming of covid-19; it came like a day-light robber that takes everything. A creative story comes to mind, of a family coming from a Sunday worship service preparing to have lunch. I see the excitement of children setting up the table as parents brought in the food from the kitchen. Suddenly, the front door drops with shooting as blood covers the dining room. Amidst the chaos came young voices that kept saying “*have mercy on us, have mercy*”.

This was a family of five, a father who reluctantly returned home after five years due to lock down and job loss, a mother who had to endure domestic violence, a teenage girl molested by her elder brother and an unemployed graduate sinking in depression and no money for further studies. “*Was there hope and love in this family?*”

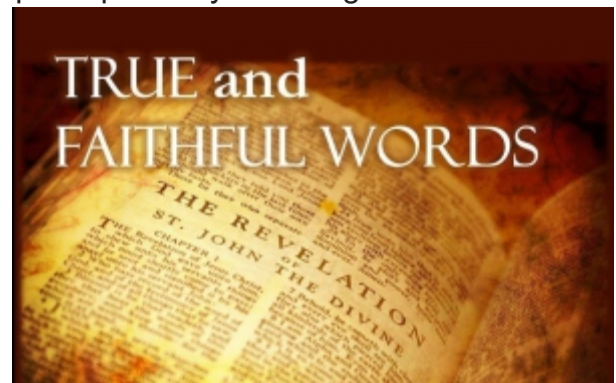


This is a narration of the pain that dawned with Covid-19. The loudest cry comes from the young people who already felt robbed of the full participation to this gift of life and young women who felt silenced from birth.

The narrative can change. Thus, Christ’s resurrection symbolises love, hope and mercy. The fact that you and I are still alive is worth a prayerful celebration this season. Let us begin to craft spiritual palm crosses that can be mounted in our hearts forever, as we become broken agents that are ready to offer **hope**. The **love** of God is

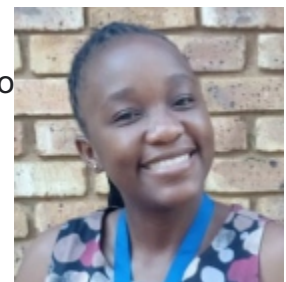


what our families yearn for. This season calls us to love beyond our iniquity wherever we are. The church needs mercy as an offering to the youth. May we be led by a church that would present to us a new image of a resurrected relational Christ, restore their voices and join them as they participate fully into this gift of life.



*Revelation 21:5 “And he that sat upon the throne said, behold, I **make all things new**. And he said unto me, write for these words are true and faithful. These words are faithful and true; this is a great comfort to those who are presently suffering, either in body or soul.”*

Miss Karabo Mamabolo
For the Youth Desk





From the desk of the
 Rev. Lungile
 Mpetsheni, General
 Secretary of General
 Assembly

“Later, knowing that everything had now been finished, and so that Scripture would be fulfilled, Jesus said, “I am thirsty.” A jar of wine vinegar was there, so they soaked a sponge in it, put the sponge on a stalk of the hyssop plant, and lifted it to Jesus’ lips.” (John 19:28-29 NIV)

At the cross, we behold a human Jesus with all the human needs, emotions, and feelings. This is made more manifest in the fifth saying of Jesus, “I am thirsty”. Jesus is the Word who became flesh and dwelt among us. He was fully human and fully divine. The human Jesus identified with humanity and suffered the ordeals that human beings suffer. He had been busy since his time of prayer at the garden of Gethsemane, which was followed by his arrest and subsequent trial by different authorities in one night. Too much talking, the beatings and the road to Golgotha had drained Jesus. After six hours on the cross, Jesus articulated his human need, “I am thirsty”



As we move from one wave of COVID-19 to another, as humanity goes through difficult situations of life, as ministers encounter challenges and difficulties in the execution of their work, it is important that we should learn to articulate our feelings, needs, anxieties, frustrations for people to know. At a time when economic inequalities and gender-based violence are exacerbated, let those who suffer raise their voices. The suffering Jesus still had a voice to express himself. Your voice is your strength. Speak out. Allow no one to silence you. Do not be content with situations you are not supposed to be content with.

As the church, we raise the voice for those who are supposed to help to hear. Near the

cross of Jesus, there were people who responded to the cry and call of Jesus. They provided him with something to drink and Jesus received it, as if he were saying, “I was thirsty, and you gave me drink”. Those who have are always challenged to hear and respond positively to the cries of those in need. We live at a time and in contexts of great suffering and abject poverty. The gap between the rich and poor has been worsened by COVID-19. Many people lost jobs and income. Many ministers do not get their stipends. It is through and in those people that we should hear the voice of Jesus, “I am thirsty”. If Jesus said, what you did to the least of my people you did to me, Jesus will receive the drink that we give to the needy, homeless, and destitute.



Let this GOOD FRIDAY and EASTER refresh us and make us cry louder and louder for help and make us restless until we give “drink” to those who are “thirsty”. That is service to our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Then, we will become a reconciled community of Christians exercising a prophetic witness to Christ.

Together we will beat COVID-19.



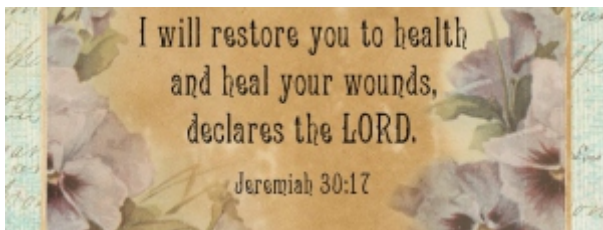
CHRIST, MY HOPE: A DIFFERENT 'CONTAGION' - FROM HEART TO HEART!

**Rev. Dr. David Mushayavanhu
Presbytery of Zimbabwe Moderator**



So many things can make us afraid. The loss of a loved one, work, a broken friendship and the experience of not being valued by others are among the many experiences that can leave us despondent, not knowing what to expect, even afraid. Those who met the risen Christ -- the two Marys, the guards, the disciples -- all experienced a profound change in their lives. Christ was alive and offered peace and hope to them. They were offered new beginnings. His presence brought not vengeance but reconciliation. Our Lord's resurrection overcame sin and death. His resurrection is true redemption, an invitation to new life, where every human flaw can be corrected and we can be freed from whatever binds and constricts or destroys true freedom, and welcomed into his kingdom.

We live in a wonderful but deeply wounded and wounding world that is at times uncaring, unforgiving, cruel, and devoid of second chances. Easter offers the assurance that the many difficulties and challenges that threaten to overwhelm us will be overcome.



Despite the desertion of his disciples, the cruelty of the soldiers and the despair of the women, Jesus offered them, as he offers us, new life, forgiveness and hope for the future. We can find healing and hope in Him who came that we might have life in all its fullness. The risen Christ, in His profound love, makes possible for all of us to have second chances, new beginnings, new life.

Jesus says to the frightened disciples, "Do not be afraid." To us he says, "Do not be afraid." Whatever it is that causes you to fear, Jesus the risen Christ will be with you and will go ahead of you and continue to be

with you. He offers you joy and peace, forgiveness and hope. Most of all he offers you himself. You need not fear. He has overcome the world!

Christ's resurrection is not a magic formula that makes problems vanish. It is the victory of love over the root of evil. This victory does not by-pass suffering and death, but passes through them, opening a path in the abyss, transforming evil into good.

For many, this 2021 year is another Easter of solitude, living amid the sorrow and hardship that the Covid 19 is causing, from physical suffering to economic difficulties. This disease has not only deprived us of human closeness, but also of the possibility of receiving in person the consolation that flows from the sacraments, particularly the Holy Communion. But the Lord has not left us alone. United in our prayer, we are convinced that He has laid His hand upon us.

This is not a time for indifference, because the whole world is suffering and needs to be united in facing the pandemic. I pray that the risen Jesus may grant hope to all the poor, to those living on the peripheries, to refugees and the homeless.

This is not a time for self-centredness, because the challenge we are facing is shared by all. We all need to recognize ourselves as part of a single family and support one another. Selfishly pursuing particular interests risks damaging the peaceful coexistence and development of future generations. Indifference, self-centredness, division and forgetfulness are not words we want to hear at this time. These words seem to prevail when fear and death overwhelm us.

May Christ, who has already defeated death and opened for us the way to eternal salvation, dispel the darkness of our suffering and lead us into the light of His glorious day. A day that knows no end".

Happy Easter to all of us!

THE FELLOWSHIPS OF THE UPCSA From the Convenor of the UPCSA Fellowships

Greetings,

The period from 2020 to date has been an extreme difficult time in the universal community, as we are faced with the most shattering societal health crisis the universe had ever faced which came in the form of the microscopic enemy christened **Covid-19**. Our denomination was not spared from the wrath of this deadliest pandemic. Yet, our hope is still in the Lord.



The festival of Easter is all about its sheer enthusiasm and peaceful spirit. Celebrated to commemorate the resurrection of Jesus Christ, this occasion also holds in itself a holy message for the followers of Christianity.

Being a holy festival, the event of Easter is celebrated with immense honour and zeal wherein people fast, pray and sing songs in praise of Lord Jesus Christ. However, this

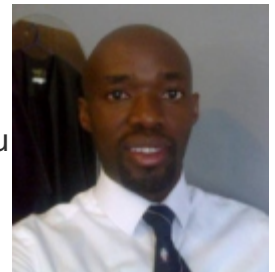
time around things are not as usual. Let's do whatever it takes to be safe.



The Fellowships are appreciating and supporting the ministry and mission of the local congregation, staying focused and doing good work for our denomination regardless of the hopeless situation.

In conclusion, the Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu, I think after searching and searching for the meaning of the future, got tired and came to a simple conclusion "There's no future without forgiveness". May we enjoy the Easter Holidays remembering the sacrifice that was done on our behalf and for us.

The Rev Sibusiso Zungu



UPCSA GENDER DESK

Gender Desk 2021- John 10:10

The Gender Desk, the Youth Desk, and the Leadership of the UPCSA ended 2020 on a high note of observing the #16DaysOfActivism. In addition to the opening and closing services that marked the period, we also had women across the UPCSA writing daily devotions. The Youth Desk tackled relevant topics on social media, with discussions, interviews, and music.



In 2020 we also saw a great deal of sadness, not only with regards to the Pandemic and subsequent lockdown, but also the rise in domestic violence and the threat on women's lives and their livelihoods. In the haunting words of the South African President: "Our country is facing a second pandemic: of violence against women and girls."

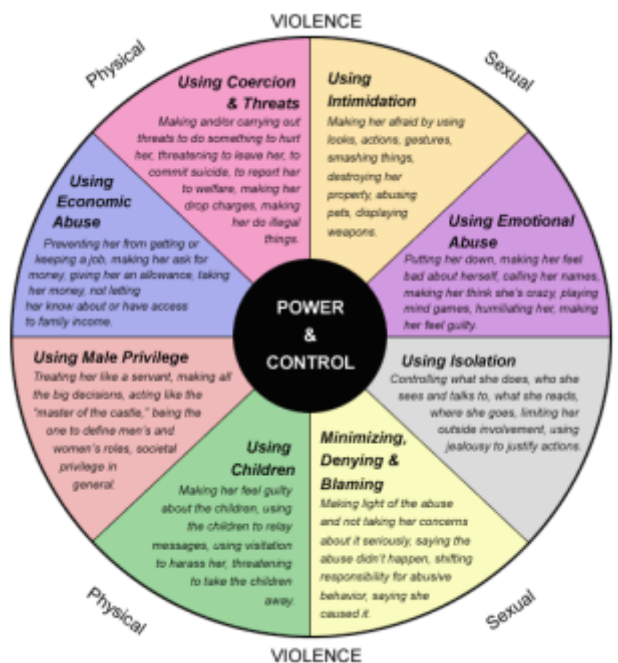
The Gender Desk met in early January to set out its goals for 2021. It became clear that there was a need for the Gender Desk to be active for the 365 days of the year, and for us to be consistently confronting issues of gender injustice amongst other things. The Desk has made it a priority to build strong relationships with the Presbyteries, with the understanding that gender justice is something that begins with/in families, congregations, and Presbyteries. We have also made it a priority to engage both men and women on the issues of gender justice.



begun its programme for the year, deciding to use the words of Jesus in John 10:10, "I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly." as the theme for the year.

There is much work to be done, but by the grace and guidance of the Lord, we are committed to "pushing back the darkness".

Rev. Melanie Cook
For the Gender Desk





FROM SORROW TO HOPE (John 20:1-18)

Rev. Jane Nyirongo
Synod of Zambia

The happenings of Good Friday left Jesus' disciples broken and deeply devastated. All their hopes had been shattered. You can hear the deep disappointment in the words of the two disciples on the road to Emmaus concerning Jesus (Luke 24:21) *"But we were hoping that it was He who was going to redeem Israel."* Their hopes had been dashed.



The disciples were engulfed by gloom. They had left everything to follow Jesus, pinning all their hopes on Him as the Messiah. But now He was dead. On top of the shock of watching Jesus' gruesome death on the cross, Peter was wrestling with his own failure in denying the Lord, and all the disciples were guilty of abandoning Him and fleeing in fear. The disciples are in a state of shock and Mary wants to distract herself from the pain of the heart by doing the last rites for her beloved master, but even that has been taken away from her. We see grief and despair in her tears. She was despondent that not only had Jesus died, but now she thought they had taken away His body so that she could not give Him a



proper burial. *"They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they*

have laid Him."

The past months have been so tough for people all over the world. In Zambia 2020 started with shocking and very disturbing events where we Zambians experienced barbaric activities of people being axed to death for ritual purposes. Then there was the onset of the COVID 19 pandemic and lives of people have changed. The sick cannot be visited in hospitals and homes. Funerals are not conducted in the normal way. People are desperate because a lot have lost their sources of income and the pandemic seems to be gaining momentum. On top of the COVID-19, we have seen a rise in domestic violence. Just a few months ago, a young hard working medical doctor was beheaded by a boyfriend and buried in a shallow grave. The cries of the family members are still loud, "We had hoped that she would have helped the family from their poverty."

It was to a people overwhelmed by such dark clouds of grief that the fact of Jesus' bodily resurrection broke in with life changing hope. The fact that Jesus is risen and ascended into heaven, soon to return for His own, can break into our lives with genuine hope in the midst of our worst trials, if we will learn the lessons from this true story, the Easter story. Mary Magdalene had been to the grave, found the tomb empty, went to call the other disciples who confirmed that Jesus was indeed not in the tomb. The disciples Peter and John then went back to the village but Mary Magdalene remained by the tomb weeping. She wanted to find Jesus, although at this point she was just trying to find His corpse. In her thinking, someone had added insult to injury by robbing the grave. Many people in Zambia find it very disturbing that the bodies of their beloved ones cannot be taken into church for a fitting Christian send

off. They find it disturbing that the minister cannot hold their hands in times of pain and suffering in the midst of Covid 19.



Mary stooped and looked in the tomb where she sees two angels who asked her, *“Woman why are you weeping?”* Jesus repeats the same question and adds another (John 20:15), *“whom do you seek?”*

Neither Jesus nor the angels asked these questions to gain information, rather, they wanted Mary (and us) to think about the implications of those questions, because in doing so we will learn how seeking the risen Saviour will turn our sorrows into hope. The empty tomb should have caused Mary not to weep from sorrow but to weep for joy. Most times we do not understand why we have to go through suffering because we don't see the big picture of the resurrection.

seems God's promises are not true, but if we believe in God's sovereignty and Jesus' resurrection someday God will work it all together for good (Romans 8:28). The hope that Jesus is risen and that he is coming again to take us to be with him and with our loved ones who have died in him, comforts us through our tears.



During Easter we do not celebrate a dead Jesus, but our Jesus has conquered death, the tomb is empty and so our sorrow has been turned to hope. A dead religion that dresses up the corpse of a dead prophet is worthless. Only a living Saviour who has triumphed over the grave offers hope for our sorrows. Let us seek a risen Lord this Easter. He has the answers for all our questions

God bless you all
Shalom



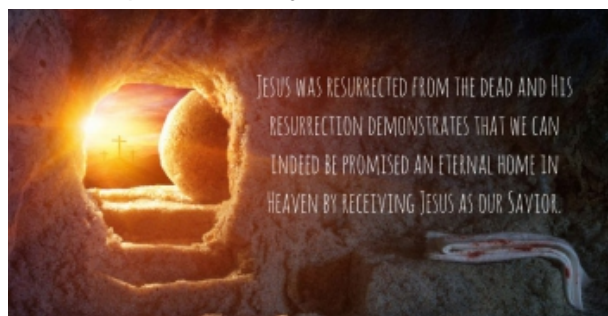
EASTER GREETINGS FROM THE UPCSА COMMUNICATIONS TEAM

During 2020 and continuing into 2021 we have all been experiencing different feelings - frustration, sadness, grief, anxiety, depression, and the list goes on. However, love, hope and mercy have been with us all through this time in the presence of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

The Easter weekend brings sorrow on Good Friday as we remember how Jesus died, and that in his love and mercy he suffered for us.



Saturday is a time of waiting and hoping. Sunday dawns with the joy of his resurrection and the knowledge that because he lives, Love, Hope and Mercy endure.



When you are struggling and you think you may be alone remember that, in fact, you are not alone. There is Grace, Hope, Mercy and Love from God, and Jesus Christ.

Always remember that while we all are sinners it was by Grace God saved us through the suffering, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

We have hope knowing we have a friend in

Jesus Christ. There is hope in healing. There is hope for the future. Trials and the sadness of loss will pass.

There is mercy. Yet while we are sinners, all of us, living in a broken world; God showed us Mercy, Love, Grace and there is Hope.

God is perfect and cannot look upon sin. That is why God sent Jesus Christ into the world to save us. Yet while we were sinners, he died for us.

We love. God loves us. There are people, family, friends, and people yet to know that love or will love us.

If you have life, you have a gift. A gift to nurture and encourage. A gift to build and build up others. A gift to grow and continuously grow. You can touch someone else's life. You can be a blessing to someone you know or to a stranger.

As the pandemic continues, keep in contact with friends, family, brothers and sisters who worship with you especially those too afraid to attend church.

There **is** Hope, Mercy and Love. I am very thankful for that, aren't you?

Stay safe brothers and sisters in Christ. May our awesome God continue to bless you all abundantly.

I and my team thank all the contributors to our Easter edition. The support you gave us is greatly appreciated.

Glenys Kelly
For the Communications
Committee



Disclaimer

The views or opinions presented in the Presbyterian Link may not necessarily represent the official position of the UPCSА.

Submissions

We welcome submissions from anyone. Please submit photos as well. The editors of the Presbyterian Link reserve the right to edit/adapt or decline articles submitted to it.

Submissions can be emailed to upcsаcommunications@outlook.com

Feedback

We would love to hear from our readers regarding any article.

Executive Editor: The General Secretary.

Editorial: Glenys Kelly.

Email them at: upcsаcommunications@outlook.com

A publication of the Uniting Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa.