

Training In Mission Programme Newsletter

Issue 4

July 28, 2017

Poverty in Paradise or The Slums of Suva

TIM Programme

In This Issue!

Poverty in Paradise or The Slums
of Suva– pg. 1 & 2

Liberation Theology– pg. 3

What is a People's Church
Today? – pg. 4

New perspective of Bible and
Church– pg. 5

Seeing new church– pg. 6

Church's response to the
Environment– pg. 7

WHAT IS MISSION OF JESUS
TODAY?– pg. 8

Mission of GOD– pg. 9



Lagi Lagi community & Wailea settlement

Not even a place considered as paradise can escape the realities of globalization. Fiji...a renowned place for an authentic pacific vacation and honeymoon destination could not escape the effects of globalization. In this picture-perfect paradise, there is a steadily growing population that lives below the poverty line.

The Training in Mission team (TIM Team) traveled to two communities in Suva, Fiji to receive an up-close experience of what poverty in Fiji has become. The team was guided through the Lagi Lagi community by a member of the People's Community Network in Fiji (PCN) who explained to the group the current situation of the growing poverty in Fiji with a total of 15% of the population living below the poverty line. Many of these poor families consist of mainly fishermen and farmers who used to live on small islands surrounding Fiji. These island families have moved to Suva for better access to health care (hospitals) and education (schools) for their children.

However, many of the parents are unable to find work in the city with the skills they possess of a fisherman or a farmer. The TIM Team also walked through the Wailea Settlement which was in poorer conditions than the Lagi Lagi community. It is interesting that two of the main livelihoods of the Fijian culture farming and fishing are no longer ways of income than can give someone an affordable and comfortable life in Suva. The capital of Fiji has become industrialized and overpowered by globalization. Fiji as a whole is falling into an economic crisis as it drops from being a first world country and hangs between the borders of a second world or third world country.

As the team ventured through the muddy paths of the Wailea settlement, they reflected on the life the community lives. The Shacks or homes built from wood and zinc, polluted rivers and streams with swimming garbage, children playing with no shoes, and clothes with holes lined across strings by almost every house.

Poverty in Paradise or The Slums of Suva

Where is God for the poor?

Does God understand their struggle?

Is it possible for the God of the poor to be the same God of those who marginalize them (the rich)?

As Christians how do we respond to the needs and issues of the poor?

Life seemed hard and unfair for the people who lived in the slums, however, the people and children seemed cheerful, waving and shouting “Bula” (hello in Fijian) as the group passed; young men enjoyed playing football in the muddy paths as people journeyed around them and headed to the city. Many people believe that the life of the slums stops or becomes stagnant; the children and the people of the slums live what they consider to be a normal life. People of these communities walk from their homes to work or school each day and return to the slums in the evening. The team saw the life of the slums as heart aching and unjust, but to the people it was simply an everyday lifestyle.

Some observations which stood out to the group was firstly how close the poor communities (slums) were to the city. One community was literally on the edge of a main road that led to Suva city, however the other slum community was more hidden, with vegetation hiding it from one side and decent looking houses from the other side. The worst of the slum was hidden in the middle. Ironically, globalization tends to marginalize the poor and push them to the outskirts of the city where an individualistic mentality operates the relations between people. The poor are forced to thrive in the outskirts of a city that they can barely afford to live in.

Secondly, as the team walked from the Wailea settlement to the main roadway many children were spotted outdoors washing taxi cars. Suva city’s transport thrives on the daily running of the bus system and taxi system, many of those who provide this service are also subjected to a life in the slums. A taxi man who receives daily earnings still cannot afford to live comfortably in Suva. This observation highlights the theory the team discussed in lectures of how the market or capitalism controls what is valued in society. The life of the people in the slums is not valued or seen as important only the service and goods they provide to society whether it may be through forms of transportation or even the produce they grow and sell in the marketplace. When did commodities become more important than people?

as the team passed through the Lagi Lagi community. One of the homes played the gospel song “Draw me close to you” by Hillsong, a well-known song sung in churches around the world. The words of the song led the group to reflect on many lingering questions such as: where is God for the poor? Does God understand their struggle? Is it possible for the God of the poor to be the same God of those who marginalize them (the rich)? More importantly, as Christians how do we respond to the needs and issues of the poor? The trip to the slums challenged the TIM Team to open their eyes and see the world, the impact of globalization, and life of the marginalized through a fresh lens. Even in the midst of what is known as paradise the realities of poverty, of injustice, and of exploitation still exists.

Article by: Renita Barnes

Liberation Theology

'To make an option for the poor' is to make an option for Jesus.

During our last week with MP Joseph, we briefly discussed a movement known as Liberation Theology. This theology is a very broad topic with different branches all over the world. In this article I will be discussing liberation theology for the poor and how we as Christians should stand in unison with our brothers and sisters who are suffering due to poverty as they fight for justice.

The whole idea of this liberation theology comes from the idea that God has a preferential love for the poor. This suggests that God is in fact NOT a neutral God but takes sides with the oppressed. This can be seen in Exodus 3:7-9, where God takes the side of the Jews who were enslaved by the Egyptians:

“The Lord said, “I have indeed seen the misery of my people in Egypt. I have heard them crying out because of their slave drivers, and I am concerned about their suffering. So I have come down to rescue them from the hand of the Egyptians and to bring them up out of that land into a good and spacious land, a land flowing with milk and honey—the home of the Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites. And now the cry of the Israelites has reached me, and I have seen the way the Egyptians are oppressing them.” (NIV)

One of the things that stood out in the text was the mention of slavery of the Jews by the Egyptian Empire. By the Jews being enslaved, it meant that they were most likely exploited, abused, marginalized, oppressed and had to live in terrible conditions.

The treatment of the Jews during that time is similar to the treatment of the poor today, even though they aren't slaves the poor are still being exploited, oppressed and marginalized by many different empires. This is why Gustavo Gutierrez has reminded people that God has a preferential love for the poor and sides with the poor.

Article by: Stuart Morrison

Liberation theology started in Latin America. This theology has three general rules or principles. First, the preferential option of the poor. Second, liberation theology has to towards social change. Third, liberation theology pursued the value that churches change society and bring equality and freedom.

From South America liberation theology spread to other parts of the world including Korea. Here, Korean theologians applied the general 3 principles to their context to create their own theological movement, which they called MINJUNG Theology. MINJUNG Theology is a theological social movement aimed at restoring justice through getting rid of dictatorships, military regimes and the exploitation of workers. MINJUNG Theology represents the voice of the people who are oppressed and discriminated. MINJUNG theology was only a social movement to prepare bringing social change with long term view at that time. It was the first to recognize social structural problems arising from modernization.

One important practical social movement of MINJUNG theology was Yong Dong Po's Urban Industrial Mission. Yong Dong Po Urban Industrial Mission (YDP-UIM) was a Christian mission organization based on progressive liberation theology and MINJUNG theology. YDP-UIM was the first workers' mission organization in Korea, which was founded in 1958 by the Presbyterian Church of Korea, and committed to "following the Liberator God in creating an industrial society of justice and peace."

The education of workers in urban and industrial societies was organized in the form of voluntary participation by laborers. At the time, the workers had developed social consciousness through small-scale activities, even when they were deprived of legal rights from the government and management. The organization's self-detailed activities include: education and training programs for workers and students; counselling to assist workers in resolving issues such as failure to receive wages, unfair dismissal, unjust treatment, and the improvement of working conditions; the formation of unions and supporting the democratization of yellow unions; and supporting the establishment of democratic relations between labor and management. Through the expansion of labor activism and improvements in labor's rights, they stopped the support of the labor movement. Nowadays, they participate in foreign immigration activities supporting migrant workers.

Article by: Eunsoo Oh

What is a People's Church Today?

Churches today have become institutions and businesses rather than a church for people.

Thousands of different denominations claim to be following Jesus Christ. Yet they teach thousands of different gospels and disagree on countless points of doctrine.

Is Jesus Christ the Head of all these denominations of today? Is Jesus Christ divided?

As young person I used to think that God's people were just scattered all through the various denominations. However, the more I read the Bible, the more I feel there must be a true Church somewhere on earth composed of people who really do what the Bible says and teach Bible the right way. But how can I know? How can I be sure where God is working today? Must of churches have become money hungry. As I'm learning Theology it makes me question churches today. What are we standing for? The characteristics of God and Jesus Christ. Does your church have the characteristics of God.

- **Love**
- **voice for the voiceless**
- **Tenderness**
- **Freedom**
- **Laughs with the poor**
- **Inclusive**
- **Relation/Relatable**
- **Reconciliation & Patience**

Now, the big question is: How can you know the right church that is following Jesus Christ, Christ was a man with actions. How can you be sure?

When church has actions: (James 2:14-24)

Today, many churches call themselves Christian. Some practice baptism by immersion in water. Others just "sprinkle" or pour water on the head of baptismal candidates. Many churches keep what they call the "Lord's Supper" every Sunday morning. Others observe this custom once a month or quarterly, or only once a year. Please let us take one step back and reflect on what we doing?

Most churches observe Sunday as their day of worship, while a few observe the Sabbath from Friday sunset to Saturday sunset. Others say that the day of worship does not matter at all.

"Again, truly I tell you that if two of you on earth agree about anything they ask for, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven."

(Matthew 18:19)

Article by: Agnes N.

New perspective of Bible and Church

God of Oikos

With professor M.P. Joseph, we learnt that in Pre-monarchic period, God is the God of oikos i.e. God of household, where God is the parent and all of God's creations are part of one family. There was no existence of superior or inferior, no hierarchy and people were satisfied with what they own. We are all God's children so we should have a sense of sharing and equality. For examples, in ancient Israel before the monarchic systems existed, God was seen as the land owner so all that lived on the land were borrowing it from God, which is quite similar to Maori people, as they also believe that they do not own the land, the earth and living creatures that exist on earth. Therefore, fence and boundaries were unnecessary and exchange value system was not available as everyone is equal.

Church Modernization

However, the God we are taught to worship today is a God of wrath, emotion and love hierarchy. This became clearer when we compare with church current situation. The church, which is meant for the entry point of in-human people or for gathering of the teaching of God of Oikos, has been misleading our mindset and our belief. From this TIM program, I have witnessed and realized that churches and chapels own great deals of land and properties in the central towns. This raises questions such as where did ownerships and belongings of the land come from and where did profits from renting go to. Which causes homelessness, child labour, starvation and poverty increase world-wide, although market is making surplus production. Churches and Christians do not help elevate the effects of marketization, capitalism and globalization.

Moreover, as an accounting student, we were taught that the accountants primary option is for the benefits of owner i.e. shareholders, for the rich to become richer but not for labour nor workers. This clearly shows that our knowledge and our consciousness were all shaped by global educations, media, entertainment and news.

But in the bible God's mission (John 3:16) and Jesus mission (John 10:10) hold different perceptions. This came to realization that the God, us Christian worship, is not the God of oikos but modernity, where the church supports exploited business markets, rejects the real value of humanity and exclude marginalize people.

Article by: Van Lal Zawmi

Saying the church must be political is something many Christian around the globe will disagree with. Yet that is because the term politics is greatly misunderstood. The true definition politics is simply people coming together to discuss and make policies about things affecting them. Which is what the church should be doing, unfortunately just like with the temple during Jesus time, the church has instead become an institution.

I have realized that through the church becoming institutionalized, it has strayed away from its purpose and it has lost its relevance in the society. However, it is time for the church to become a radical movement that challenges society. In order to do this the church has to turn back to the way Jesus did mission. Just like Jesus the church must not conform to the world, but oppose all the hierarchy, doctrines, corruption and institutions formed by society.

Jesus was also a man who took a radical path to bring sanity and the marginalized people closer to God. This is something the church should also be doing. By doing this the church will become a political church that associates itself with the poor, fights for justice and equality, gives a voice to the voiceless, ends oppression, becomes action oriented and never conform itself to the world (Roman 12:1-2)

These things will not only create a political church but it would also break the church out of its comfort zone. The Gospels tell us that Jesus challenged the Jewish community and thus pushed the Jewish people out of their comfort zone. In the same way by challenging the church to become more politically orientated, it is pushing the church out of its comfort zone.

Article by: Wellingtone Bwalya

Seeing new church

What is Church?

The definition and understanding of the term, church, is different for each person. For me the church is a place where people come together to become a community, this place is not subject to time and space constraints, the church can be in the streets, at home or anywhere. This community is made up of different people who make each other feel at rest and protected, who help each other gain a deeper understanding of God. It is also a place those people can call a home.

The most original meaning of the term, church, comes from the Greek word, "Ekklesia".

The definition of Ekklesia in the New Testament means "church." It comes from the root words ek, meaning "out from and to" and klesia, meaning "to call," and has to do with a group of people called out from one place and to another. It is also described as a group of people who have been called out of the world and to God. This is the church.

However, the present church has become like many old pipes, staggered together, each with their own system, but not linked to each other, thus causing blockage and division within the church.

In such a situation, we need to ask ourselves, how can we see the church in a new way?



1. Wider perspectives:

Change the church's old system of hierarchy, gender discrimination and disregarding the youth's opinion and voice to a new system that is classless, has gender equality and listens to the youth's opinion and voice.

2. Being Inclusive, receptive and understanding pluralistic:

The Church should be leading and teaching people to understand different religions, tribes and communities and not forcing our faith onto others.

3. Transform society:

The church needs to move society towards justice and peace, while resisting the social structure of injustice, so that humankind can be free from all kinds of oppression, exploitation and slavery.

4. Ecumenism:

The church has to become one, which means it expresses the common belief and mission diversity of Jesus which is to be inclusive and to accept each other.

Through the different topics in this curriculum (globalization, capitalism, environmental change), I have been able to see the importance of the church in society. Before this program, I always felt that my strength is small and that I could not bring change, but during this TIM program I have had the chance to learn new things and meet new friends from all over the world. I believe that each of us can be a mobilizer to get the church to change. Although, change is not easy, we should still try to do it, as I believe that when we are willing to take action, we will be able to see the new church.

Article by: Song Ying

Church's response to the Environment

Caring for the environment is our collective and individual responsibilities. Each of us has a role to play in preserving the earth that we all live on. The environment includes human nature, the culture, people and simply Gods creation.

God created everything including us, anything we create depends on using what God has already given us. Thus, by working hard people are able to reap its rewards. We help to sustain life, build community and learn to love our neighbours through the manner and output of our work.

The church including church related organisations is the one body exclusively dedicated to advancing the mission of God, so all Christians are part of the church. Of course, the church itself is not the kingdom of God and the church work is not the only way believers go about advancing Gods kingdom. Some Christians pointed out that the church is the only society which exists for the benefit of its non-members.

Many **people** think that you must change before you come to **God**, but it's the opposite that is true. The problem: **human** sin and its results. The **mission**: to undo the dire **effects** of sin, to bring reconciliation between us and **God**, and to extend that reconciliation.

The world God created is good, and when humans begin to work alongside God in creation, things become 'very good' (Genesis 1:31). Unfortunately, due to the Fall of humanity, the world comes up far short of God's intent, and the human condition ranges from very good (still, at times) to worse. Both the creation of the world and its redemption by God's grace are therefore the mission of God. Many societies are discovering that environmental problems are more spiritual than technological. People everywhere are looking for the way, the truth, and the life. The time is ripe for offering the living water that only Christ gives to the world as an expression of God's love.

The Mission of the Church is to Proclaim the Word, curb the injustice inequality and Build the Kingdom of God. And the rapidly increasing process of globalization also has effects on the Church. That's the mission we need to pursue nowadays. Similar to Jesus, who simply told people the truth and give his full life to save people. That too is our mission.

Earth provides enough to satisfy every man's need, but not every man's greed.

-Mahatma Gandhi-

Article by: Felauai Opetai

WHAT IS MISSION OF JESUS TODAY?

Jesus mission in the world today.

The mission of Jesus (triumph of God's kingdom in a world of chaos) The world of today is a complex mix of people. Can the mission of Jesus Christ affect the society of today?

The teachings of Jesus are guidelines that all people can follow, they are a rubric for life. The Bible tells of the life of Jesus, the stories He told, and the miracles He Performed. The troubles of today are very different than the troubles of the times of Christ, but the needs of the people are the same. People need love, kindness, and forgiveness, people also long for peace and harmony. The mission of Jesus Christ is about fulfilling the needs of all of God's people, the mission of Jesus Christ was to teach God's people, all people, how to live in peace and harmony.

He came down from heaven, born into a poor and simple family, and lived the life of a man. Jesus taught the people about forgiveness. He taught about loving one another and caring for each other. Jesus taught the people about God, God's expectations, and the kingdom of God. Jesus fulfilled his mission on Earth by example, through parables, miracles, and sacrifice. The resurrection and ascension into Heaven was not the end of Jesus' mission on Earth but only the beginning.

The world of today has a fair amount of despair, hatred, and evil. But there is also a tremendous amount of love, kindness, and good. All across the globe, there are countries at war, people fighting and killing. There are people who are poor, without food to eat and clothes to wear. And, there are people full of anger and hate.

Across the globe, there are also people of compassion, willing to help. There are people with riches looking to share. And, there are people full of good, longing for peace. The world of today is full of people who need and people who can give. The troubles of today are many but the solution is easy, Jesus Christ.

People of today can learn how to manage some of the troubles of the world by following the examples of the mission of Jesus.

Treat all people with respect those who have more can give to those who have none through the food shelves and local missions. Forgive one another. Follow the examples of Jesus and there will be peace and harmony in the world.

The mission of Jesus and the world today have many things in common. The needs of the people are the same the people of today are very diverse.

The mission of Jesus is to fulfill the needs of all God's people. The life of Jesus is the rubric for a live of goodness.

Article by: Royden Campbell-Andries

The resurrection and ascension into Heaven was not the end of Jesus' mission on Earth but only the beginning.

Mission of GOD

This newsletter is about my presentation on the **mission of God**.

In our class, we discussed the mission of God in different perspectives, and we got some ideas about this by the end of this class. As we all know the Bible, that is the Old Testament, contains information on the love of God and the punishment of God. Reading that and the New Testament, we think about our world today and we must consider what is the mission of God in our life and world?

The best understanding, we have for this question, is that our life are a part of God's mission, to do what God needs us to do ourselves. In the Christian faith God is the Alpha and Omega; all things around the world are controlled by him. That why our lives are a gift from God which we should to use as part of His mission throughout the whole world.

I learned more about this point and I think this is a good point for the people around the world. We can learn to work and to make the right things for the people who are close to Him. This is because we were created in the image of God and we make the correct and the wise decisions for the people around the world.

In my conclusion I have it in my mind that our Life is the gift from God to share. So we should live by making a good relationship for those people next to us and for all the people around the world. If we do this that means we are making or sharing the mission of God as He wants us to.

Article by: Tetoaiti Tapui

