



# **TLM Daily Devotions**

**March 2016**





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**„Christ is risen!”  
„Truly, He is risen! Hallelujah!”**

This was the first greeting of Christians in the first century and is still used today as greeting among Eastern Orthodox and Eastern Catholic Christians, accompanied by three kisses in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

The entire period of Lenten, in the month of March, is focused on and culminates in Easter. The overwhelming joy on having a risen, living Lord, and through Him eternal life.

We all get meaning through Him. We all get perspective through Him. And while we try to do our very best we know only through His resurrection do we have meaning (1 Cor 15,58)

Let us express this overwhelming joy in a simple, very easy way all around the Globe, by embracing TLM family worldwide! Many of us still remember in former times when, during the international meetings, David Beazley – convenor of the Spiritual Ministry Working Group- led the TLM choir! Let us re-create it in a new way! On Easter Monday you will find the text of a well-known hymn. We are physically separated but let us form a worldwide chorus on this Easter Monday! You can sing this hymn on your own as well. But why not with someone else? Today’s technology easily permits to create a duo, or a trio on skype, and you can SING with one heart with her/him/them, despite distance, continents, different time, language and circumstances: *“He’s our Lord, He is risen from the dead, and He’s our Lord!”*

All you need to do, is just to decide. Then choose a TLMer and fix up a time in advance for Easter Monday with him/her/them for a common praise-singing on skype! You may then be sure that others will sing too and our voices from all ends will be praising The One, Who is risen, Whom we love, try to follow and to serve!

Happy praise-singing, TLM!

Marta Risko



## Integrity

*“For we are to God the aroma of Christ among those who are being saved and those who are perishing. To the one we are the smell of death and to the other the fragrance of life. And who is equal to such a task? Unlike so many, we do not peddle the word of God for profit. On the contrary, we speak before God with sincerity like men sent from God”. 2 Corinthians 2:15-17*

Integrity is defined as the quality of being whole, unimpaired or free from damage. The word is also used to describe the quality of someone with strong ethical and moral values, which are not compromised even when under attack. In practical terms, it describes the state where there is complete harmony between one's thoughts, words and actions. It is the ability to practice in our daily life what we know to be good and right.

All of us, being human, often find it difficult to do what is right. People we serve are quick to spot the disconnect between what we preach and what we practice. In Jesus, we see the perfect model of integrity – one whose actions exactly mirrored his thoughts and words.

In the passage from 2 Corinthians, Paul uses the analogy of incense to describe this quality. Incense burns with a characteristic fragrance, which is unchanging, irrespective of who smells it. Yet in this example, Paul describes the picture of the victorious Roman army, marching in to take a city they have just conquered. The defeated captives are herded in front and between them and the victors, walk men carrying censers with burning incense. The same perfume signifies defeat and shame to those in front, but victory and honour to those behind.

As we live our daily lives, we are called to live and speak what we believe. To some it may appear as a message of hope and redemption, while to others it may seem foolish or even threatening. Just as the incense cannot change its perfume, we are called to be true to what we believe – that God has called us to witness to his love and grace. - The words of the old hymn express this truth so beautifully:

*“Though what I dream and what I do  
In my weak days are always two,  
Help me oppressed by things undone,  
Oh Thou, whose dreams and deeds were one”.*

May God enable us to live faithful to our calling.

**Joyce Ponnaiya.** I am a pathologist and worked for many years, till my retirement at the Christian Medical College and Hospital in Vellore, India. Apart from my academic appointment, I have served as the Principal (Dean) of the college and later as the Director (CEO) of the organisation. From 2006 to 2011 after retiring from CMC, I worked as Consultant Pathologist at the Schieffelin Institute of Health Research and Leprosy Centre (SIHR &LC), at Karigiri in India. Thereafter, I continue to work at Karigiri in an honorary part-time position as pathologist. I have served on the Board of Governors of both the TLM India Trust and TLM International.



## Who am I?

*Psalm 8,4- 8 and Psalm 139,13-16*

Have you ever tried to find out who you are?

If I look into the mirror, a Turanian type of face looks back at me, witnessing to our Asian origin, that our ancestors departed from the Ural-Altai region for the better life towards West. If I think on my sanguinistic temperament – either up high, low down, never in between- it comes from my Ugrian, or Hungarian genetic programs. If I think on my attitude, I am a great mixture of my organised mother and my intuitive father. My love for travelling is a heritage of my great-grandfather, a captain on the Black Sea. The same directness brings me over and over into conflicts or often saves situations. My big dreams push me forward, my disappointments stick me in the mud. My emotions are deep as sea, my reactions break out as a volcano.

How many people influenced and interacted with me so far to become what I am right now? Impossible to make a list of ancestors, relatives, neighbours, schoolmates, teachers, TLMers, people of the parishes, the smiling postman, professors, the warmhearted gipsy woman, my Sunday-school pupils, the just-met-once ones influencing positively or negatively, leaving their footprints on my soul, engraving their signs into my memory, my personality, my taste, my behaviour, giving concrete examples, or just 'déjà-vu' memories... legions of people, adding something, forming something, stimulating or destroying, loving or refusing, briefly: forming me to be, what I am, what I will be till the end, identified by the same name.

My gifts – wonderful ones from the Creator. My hate – covers me like an avalanche. When I watch the sky, I feel the infinite, I am inspired with wings to fly. My dark thoughts and wickednesses? – I am shaming them a minute later as an outsider. "Not me! No!" When I am influencing others, forming them – I have power and am strong. When my cat touches me all the time for what she wants – I feel myself a slave. When I am planting a flower – I contribute to creation. When I am struggling with myself – I destroy what had been perfectly done. When I am counselling - I am a leader, a reference. When I am crying with my pillow wet – I am a helpless child. I deny myself for giving love and care – but am shouting out to be loved and cared for. What a mixture, how wide the extremities, ups and downs, good and evil, blessing and burden...

Aware of the honour: I am a unique piece! God is One! He created me to be unique as well, *"knit me together in my mother's womb..."* The wrinkles in my palm, my fingerprint, my iris, my soul, my voice, my destiny, my handwriting, my all: never repeated, never repeatable anew! *"What is mankind...? Little lower than angels..."* But how much higher than any other creation! And yet, how miserable I am...

Who am I? What am I indeed? Am as I am, am what I am:

I am Yours, Lord. Forever Yours.

### **Marta Risko**

Country Leader TLM Hungary since 2010, formerly volunteer. Minister of the Presbyterian Church Hungary. 39 years with TLM.



## Closed Doors

### Acts 16:6-15

Recently, while away visiting friends, I had news that our minister had died very unexpectedly and suddenly. He had been with us for a year and was not yet 50. As you can imagine, this has been a traumatic time for family, friends and the congregation. A door has firmly closed and now we must seek God's will for the future. As I thought about that I was drawn to this passage in Acts.

Paul and Silas had been visiting the churches previously set up and all was going well until they tried to move into Asia, to enter new territory for the Lord. We are not told exactly how God closed the way forward but we are told quite clearly that the Holy Spirit prevented them. Put yourself in Paul's shoes for a minute – how really disappointed and frustrated he must have been – his plans were not working out – can you just imagine him on his knees before the Lord, can you hear him challenging God, asking why, oh why, the way forward, in his eyes, was blocked. We all get frustrated when our plans don't work out or something or someone gets in our way. Sometimes we don't take time to see that as a "closed door" and we make ourselves even more frustrated trying to work out a way round the situation. We need to follow Paul's example.

Paul was a man of prayer. It was in those times of prayer that he was open to receive God's guidance; that he learned to let God put aside his prejudices and go where or do what God wanted of him. God rarely gives guidance by writing it in large letters in the sky. Paul needed to let God speak into his heart over his frustration. God showed him a picture of a man, a man from Macedonia, calling to him for help. We all respond when someone calls for help and Paul was no exception and so he and Silas find themselves embarking on Mission Europe! Yes, going West to Greece instead of East. Read on in the story - not only did God change the direction of Paul's travel but instead of a man from Greece, he found himself ministering to a Turkish lady!!

It is interesting to speculate how world history might have been changed had Paul not been obedient to God's leading in this direction. In his book *The Message of Acts*, John Stott says that the significance of this has unfolded over the centuries, as Europe became the first Christian continent and a base for missionary outreach to the rest of the world.

God's timing is better than ours, by far! Sometimes, it can be a long time later before we can see how God guided at a particular time. It is only when we are able to look back on the twists and turns of life that it becomes clear that the Holy Spirit was at work through it all. Times of difficulty and disappointment may be the points where God wants to renew and redirect our lives and our work.

May we, each one, be blessed as we trust the Holy Spirit to lead us, in good times and difficult patches. Spend a little time reflecting on your experience of closed doors and apparent dead ends, and your experience of God opening up new avenues of witness and work for Him. Ask for grace to trust God and to be open to His unexpected open doors.

**Christine Osman,**

Scotland (retired International Treasurer TLM)



## For now we see through a glass

*When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things - 1 Corinthians 13:11 NKJV*

*For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known. - 1 Corinthians 13:12 KJV*

These are two of my favourite verses from the Bible. I love the evocative image of smoky glass, but most of all I enjoy the reassurance we are not expected to make sense of everything around us. Sometimes we see chaos or extreme suffering. We know God is working his purpose out and struggle to understand. Verse 11 tells us to grow or mature in faith, but then I remember the smoky glass and know there are times when we simply cannot understand and make sense of what we see.

To know Purulia in 1968 was to know the Leprosy Mission. Five hundred patients, men women and children in the hospital wards and in the home section, cared for by more than a hundred staff. There was a school for the children, a shoe shop and artificial limb centre, acres of paddy fields, and must not forget the co-operative store. There were six rural clinics including Jhalda within a radius of thirty miles, and the jeep ambulance ferried paramedical staff and supplies to a different clinic each day. Simonpur, then a beggar village, was a short distance from the compound. In the centre of the compound was the huge church of the Good Samaritan where staff and patients attended prayers every morning and services on Sunday. Many staff lived in Uffmanpur just beyond the football pitch. Other staff members were former healthy children whose marriages had been arranged by the mission, and lived in their own houses on land given to them by the mission. All the pioneers of the Leprosy Mission had worked at Purulia. Paramedical and physio technician students lived in the Tingore. The South East Asia office was across the road from the mission gate. All of this and more was waiting me when I arrived as a volunteer to upgrade the work in the laboratory.

To understand Purulia in 1968 you had to be there. The patients were treated with DDS. Some patients could be cured, and receive their certificates in church to enable them to return to their families and villages. But the cure was a long time coming and there were always visible signs of leprosy and disabilities, so often the families would not allow them to return. The older patients had already lost limbs before starting treatment. Many were blind. True, there were daily dramas and tragedies but my only regret was not being able to share the vibrancy, enthusiasm and hope with my family on the other side of the world.

I have returned to Purulia many times and great changes have taken place over the years, but I will never understand why I was born with so much and yet many people I met in Purulia were born into poverty and then burdened with leprosy.

### Rosemary Tootle

Since retiring I have volunteered twice a week in the Leprosy Mission International Office in Brentford



## What the Father does, the Son does

*John 5:19* So Jesus explained himself at length. “I’m telling you this straight. The Son can’t independently do a thing, only what he sees the Father doing. The Father loves the Son and includes him in everything he is doing. (The Message)

*The following is an excerpt from a devotional book called “Hearing His Voice” by Chris Tiegreen that really ‘hit home’ for me recently.*

Followers of Jesus see Him as their example. He came to us as a human being to show us how to live and relate to the Father. He came to show us what is possible for us if we live in obedience to God’s Spirit. Jesus told us that the Son can do nothing by himself, but only does what He sees His Father doing.

So what does this teach us? If we are following Jesus example, we too should do nothing independently. We should also follow the lead of the Father. We are to hear Him and respond as a way of life.

How can we know what the Father is doing, so we can follow? We have to learn to notice what He is doing.

To see where He is working. To know when He is setting up a situation that will display His glory. If we ask the Father to help us be aware of His activity, He will show us. He will alert us to His presence, His work and His words – if we choose to consciously watch and listen.

We need to be willing to ask “Lord, where are you in this situation? What are you up to?” Then He can answer by speaking into our hearts and making things clearer. He wants us to live with and in constant awareness of Him. He can make this awareness a real possibility.

So become a noticer. Ask the father what He’s up to. Watch for where He is working. Align yourself with his activity and do what you see Him doing. Hearing His voice is not as difficult when we are aware of His activity and are partnering with Him in it.

*As colleagues and friends in The Leprosy Mission family, I feel that this is what we are doing each day. Following in His footsteps. Doing what he did with people affected by leprosy when He was on earth. Often, especially these days, as we all struggle to raise funds, and fight for the leprosy cause in our respective countries - it is easy to feel discouraged and wonder if all this is really what Jesus would want? But I believe that if we follow the advice above, the Father WILL show us the way through the difficult paths. If we look for him in the tough situations and ask Him to show us what He is up to, He may not make it all immediately clear, BUT He will give us His peace that passes ALL understanding. And eventually we will see what He has been up to...*

### **Natalie Smith,**

Country Leader, The Leprosy Mission Papua New Guinea  
Australian. Former work with TLM – Nigeria (1998-2005), Timor Leste (2010-2013), Myanmar (2014-2015)



## The impossible request!

*When Jesus looked up and saw a great crowd coming toward him, he said to Philip, "Where shall we buy bread for these people to eat?" He asked this only to test him, for he already had in mind what he was going to do. John 6.5-6 NIVUK*

This record takes place on the shores of the Sea of Galilee at the time of the Passover Feast, an extremely important feast in the Jewish calendar. It was the first feast they celebrated when God delivered them from their 450 years of bondage to the Egyptians. For us as Christians, we celebrate the death of Jesus and our deliverance by His shed blood for the forgiveness of our sins.

A large crowd had gathered, 5 000 men, the record tells us, from a large group of people that had come to Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover Feast. I would like to say, from many parts of the known world. It seems that they were in need of a meal, hence the desire for Jesus to feed them. As we read through the story miraculously the many thousands of people were fed, filled and their need for sustenance was satisfied from a very small amount of food collected from a boy.

The element of this story I want to focus on is:

*He asked this only to test him, for he already had in mind what he was going to do.*

In life, in ministry, (a by the way though, we're all in full time ministry, just with different jobs to do, a job is the same as a calling) in reaching out to touch the wounded, the hurting and needy Jesus often asks us to do the seemingly impossible with this in the back of His mind: *He asked this only to test him, for he already had in mind what he was going to do.*

Have you ever felt like Philip, who said: *...not be enough for each of them to get a little...* So often there is only enough for a boy in our lives! But Jesus knows what He is doing!

Jesus is testing us! Will we stretch our faith, just a little more? Will we trust Him just a little more? Will we turn our eyes towards heaven and in joy say I'll do it Lord, because you have asked and I know without a doubt you are more than able to see me through.

I have a sneaky feeling, maybe what you're facing today, what the Mission is facing today: Jesus is testing you because He knows what He is going to do in yours and my life. *"Jesus looked at them and said, 'With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.'"*

God never gives you a dream that matches your budget, He's not checking on your bank account, He's checking on you faith account!

### Dan Izzett

Zimbabwe. Retired pastor. I was diagnosed with lepromatous leprosy in 1972. Served on TLMI board for eight years and on the Zimbabwe board for 15 years. I now serve on the ALM board and do advocacy for them.





## To hear from God

*“I hear the roar of rain approaching” 1 Kings 18:41*

The words of Elijah were a turning point in the life of a nation. After 3 ½ years of drought and not a single drop of rain or dew, the nation was in a disaster. Nothing was growing and the animals were dying. All of the people was affected and threatened.

To understand this situation we have to look at the background. The people of Israel were turning their backs on God and the king was leading the people in the wrong direction - away from God. Instead of worshiping God they worshiped idols like Baal. The blessings of God were not present anymore. Through a prayer of Elijah the heaven was closed for a long period of time.

God saw the situation and was acting through the prophet Elijah, and after 3 ½ years of drought the time was ready for a real spiritual confrontation. We can read about the spiritual struggle on Mount Carmel. The result was a national revival when all the people returned to God and confessed: The Lord – he is God!

Now God was ready to restore the lives of the people. And he starts to talk to his servant, Elijah, through the sound of rain. Elijah could hear the sound of heavy rain although the sky was shining blue. He was convinced about the future and he heard from God in a prophetic way - the coming of rain. This sign from God led him in a process of prayer on Mount Carmel. And in this time of prayer (we don't know how long it was) we can notice the conflict between what God is promising and what we can see in the circumstances. The servant of Elijah said: “I didn't **see** a thing” And the prophet said: “Please go back. You are wrong. I can **hear** the rain!” We all know the outcome of this conflict. God answered the prayers with rain, just as he promised. A new time began for the people with joy, sewing and harvesting. Their life was returning and the future was secure.

What is God telling you and me? It's so important to listen to God. We often experience the same conflict between what God is saying and what we can see with our eyes. What we can hear from God is more trustworthy than what we can perceive with our eyes. Unfortunately we often trust “the reality”- what we can see - more than what we, by faith, can hear from God.

What is God saying to you? About your life, your family, your ministry. What is God telling you about the work of TLM in your country and partner countries? Are we listening attentively to the voice of God? He wants to communicate with us when we are ready to listen.

The important thing is not what we see but what we hear from God!

*The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective. Elijah was a human being, even as we are. He prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the land for three and a half years. Again he prayed, and the heavens gave rain, and the earth produced its crops. James 5:17-18*

**Allan Ekstedt** Country leader of TLM Sweden



## Let your unfailing love surround us, LORD, for our hope is in you alone...

*“You can make many plans, but the LORD’s purpose will prevail.” Proverbs 19:21 (New Living Translation)*

*“We put our hope in the LORD. He is our help and our shield. In him our hearts rejoice, for we trust in his holy name. Let your unfailing love surround us, LORD, for our hope is in you alone.” Psalm 33:20-22 (New Living Translation)*

As I write this, the interviews for the new International Director are taking place and I am reminded that we can make many plans but the Lord’s purpose will prevail. As a mission, we are facing a time of significant change with the departure of the General Director and the appointment of a new International Director and I am so grateful that at such a time as this, we can put our hope in the Lord for he is our help and our shield.

Much prayer has gone into the new appointment and I am sure that the person that God wants in this position will be appointed, I am so glad that we can pray for and trust in God’s sovereignty at this time. Many members of the TLM Fellowship are facing change and challenges as projects come to an end or finance cannot be found for a new project or even a continuing project or facing the challenges of donor retention and acquiring new donors and this can be very hard. This is a mission that was birthed and cradled in prayer and one of our great strengths is that we can come before our God in prayer and present our petitions, with thanksgiving, in the knowledge that He will hear and answer our prayers even if it is not exactly how we think they should be answered!!

For some people change is a time of real joy, a new challenge to be relished, for others it can be a source of stress and unhappiness, wherever you are in that spectrum, we can choose to put our hope in the Lord in the knowledge that he is our help and our shield.

When I am finding things hard, I always come back to the word of God, because I know that God is faithful and worthy of our trust and He does speak through his word and in other ways. I am so grateful that we can rest in the truth of Psalm 46:1 “God is our refuge and strength, always ready to help in times of trouble.”

My prayer for me personally and for us across the TLM Fellowship is that we will rejoice in the Lord, for we do trust in his holy name and that we daily walk in the knowledge that his unfailing love surrounds us for our hope is in him alone.

### **Jade George**

(was Phillips), PA to General Director and Office Manager for TLMI. I have been privileged to work at TLM for six years now and really appreciate being part of the TLM Fellowship.



## Living our values every day: Justice

*“He has showed you, O man, what is good. And what does the LORD require is you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God”. Micah 6:8*

In our advocacy programmes, in order to raise the issues of injustice and oppression, we ask our supporters to do various things like write to their Members of Parliament, volunteer for a day or longer, give to a cause, sign a petition or share a fact on Facebook and Twitter. This action is important, but it is not the whole picture when it comes to fighting injustice.

Justice is often invoked by passionate teachers, pastors and leaders inviting us into NEW action. As I write this, my thoughts are towards what I will say in Church on World Leprosy Day at the end of January – often my sermon is full of thoughts about justice. I am always grateful for the material that is prepared by Members which demonstrated the justice issues each year. Justice is often focused on something new that we need to start doing, but what about the actions you and I take every day? Justice isn't always about doing something new; it's about aligning what we already do with Kingdom values.

Justice isn't simply an action once a year, it is a lifestyle. Every day when we wake up, each of us is faced with decisions – what clothes to wear, what food to eat, what to pray for, where to invest our money etc.

Our prayer is that our everyday actions will be infused with justice.

**What is Biblical justice?** The state of wholeness due all of God's creation. Justice is required for Shalom. Shalom is much more than just peace – it is flourishing. *“I have come that you might have...life in its fullness”*. In the absence of justice, we are not truly flourishing. Life in its fullness is not possible. Where there is no justice, Shalom is impaired.

God loves justice. God has a heart for justice. God is devoted to justice: *“Seek justice; do justice; let justice roll down like waters; imitate me in loving justice”* (Isaiah 1:17; Amos 5:24)

Today, how can we make justice a characteristic of our lifestyle, not just for a campaign or a special activity, but every day, in all that we do?

### Jannine Ebenso

with TLM since 1991. Served as a physiotherapist in Nigeria for 16 years (1992-2008). At TLMI Brentford since 2008. Head of Quality Assurance at TLMI since May 2014.



## Echoes in Eternity

*Ecclesiastes 3:11 (NLT) "God has... planted eternity in the human heart"*

In one of my favourite movies 'Gladiator', the lead character General Maximus inspires his soldiers in advance of a deadly battle with the cry "What we do in life echoes in eternity".

That's certainly true for us as Christians. Our time here on earth is short when set against that of eternity and yet what we do here will have consequences lasting forever. Rick Warren, the Christian writer and pastor, wrote "Today is the visible tip of the iceberg. Eternity is all the rest you don't see underneath the surface".

So what does that mean for how we live our lives in the here and now? Matthew Henry, the bible commentator, said, "It ought to be the business of every day to prepare for our final day". On a personal level we need to ensure we are right with God. With this in mind our priorities start to change, our values change, we look at our character, at our relationships much more than we do our material needs and worldly achievements.

This doesn't mean we stop engaging in the present earth and sort of float around thinking detached 'heavenly thoughts' - whatever those are! No, on the contrary, eternity focused Christians also get stuck in to the here and now, striving to be right with God, the people and the world around us in our families, in our jobs, in our communities. Scot McKnight, Professor of New Testament at the Northern Seminary, describes "The promise of heaven as God making all things right... The God who promises us that kind of heaven is at work in us now to infect the world with making things right everywhere we go." C S Lewis once said "if you read history, you will find that the Christians who did most for the present world were just those who thought most of the next".

In light of this let's ask ourselves the question that Rick Warren posed in 'The Purpose Driven Life': 'Since I was made to last forever, what is the one thing I should start doing and the one thing I should stop doing today?'

Live in the light of eternity, for *"God's plans endure forever; his purposes last eternally" (Psalms 33:11).*

### **Pete Garratt**

I am Head of Operations Support in the International Office of TLM, joining two years ago.



## RESTORATION GOD

### *Psalm 23:3 "He Restores My Soul"*

A television programme which I enjoy watching is called 'Restoration Man'; in it people buy up derelict buildings and set about restoring them because they see in them something worth saving. Watching this programme one day made me think about how God is also doing a work of restoration bringing new life to the wounded, the weary, the disillusioned, the broken, the rejected and those worn down by the ravages of life.

In Hebrew the word for 'restore' used in this verse is in the imperfect tense indicating intensive, ongoing, continuous action. The root form of the verb is 'shuv' which means "to turn back, return, bring back, restore, refresh, and take back"

Psalm 23 shows us that God is the one, not us, who is intensively "turning us back, bringing us back, restoring, refreshing, and taking us back" to a place of spiritual life and health in which our "soul" – our deepest, inner-most spiritual, mental, and emotional being – is replenished with His eternal and life giving presence and truth.

In Genesis 1 we read throughout the creation narrative that when God had finished creating something he looked at it and saw that it was good. The last verse of chapter 1 says, "God saw all that he had made and it was very good."

We are made in the image of God who is good.

In the essence of our being we are good but the effects of sin, the choices human beings have made throughout history and choices we have made in our lives have damaged both the image we have of who God is and the image we have of who we are.

God's desire is to restore us to be who he created us to be. However he can only do what we allow him to do.

In the TV programmes the people who start a restoration project often encounter unexpected problems and challenging issues along the way meaning that the work takes much longer and at greater cost than they expected. But they persevere because they know it will be worth it in the end.

God's ongoing restoration work in the lives of his people is a time-consuming and costly work but one which he will never give up on.

In what areas of your life do you need God's restoration at this time?

Open yourself to God today and allow him to touch you, heal you and restore you.

### **Kathleen Gavin (nee Finlay)**

New Zealand Physiotherapist with TLM in India, Nepal & Bangladesh 1981-1996. Now an ordained Anglican Priest and Spiritual Director living in Raglan, NZ and member of the Leprosy Mission NZ Board.



## God's requirements

*Micah 6:8b "To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with our God".*

Towards the end of last year, the TLMI-Ethiopia office moved from the business centre of Addis Ababa to another area. Now we are situated in the area close to ALERT Hospital and it's the area where our Partners have their offices and many of our beneficiaries live.

I thought "wonderful, I am looking to the mountains". What I did not realize at first was that the lowest hill was the rubbish belt of Addis Ababa which had accumulated over more than 60 years. This place has been a source of income for many people who look through the rubbish to find something still worth selling.

This rubbish belt came to mind when I was reading through Mark's Gospel. The religious leaders came with their questions to Jesus; not because they wanted to learn and gain deeper understanding of the scriptures. They wanted to trap him. They studied the Law of Moses and the prophets however; their own rules and regulations seem to have the upper-hand in dealing with people (Mark 7:5-13). People who came to the temple to sacrifice to the Lord had to buy the animal for their sacrifice in the temple court, often at a higher price. Corruption and greed seemed to be the problems here (Mark 11:15-17). The road to God - to come to know Him better and to worship Him - meant getting over many hurdles and restrictions for ordinary people, Jew and Gentile alike, at that time.

We are an International Organization where people are working cross culturally. We can reflect on our own situation. Are we Kingdom builders? Are we making disciples? Are we sharing the love of Jesus with the people we serve or come in contact with, or are our traditions and habits in the way?

What does God require of us? Micah 6:8 makes it clear. What does the Lord require of us? It is: *"To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with our God".*

The Message: What God is looking for in men and women, it is quite simple: Do what is fair and just to your neighbour, be compassionate and loyal in your love, and don't take yourself too seriously – take God seriously.

The Good News Bible speaks about doing what is just, **to show constant love**, and to live in humble fellowship with our God.

To show constant love is a daily challenge which we cannot do on our own. It is by Grace alone that we can love our neighbours. When we realize that, we will point only to Jesus as the source of life and share of his love and mercy to all who seek him.

### Tanny Hagens

Dutch national. Working with TLM since 1983; First in Thailand, moved to Indonesia; worked in Myanmar and PNG; at the moment working in Ethiopia as Interim Country Representative of TLMI-Ethiopia.



**“His pleasure is not in the strength of the horse, nor his delight  
in the legs of the warrior”**

*Psalm 147:10*

As my tuk-tuk bumped to a stop outside New Delhi station, I wondered how I'd find my way through the crowd to my platform. The dark, humid air, reverberating with mournful locomotive sirens, compounded my bewilderment.

Then, from nowhere, a diminutive porter darted forward and plucked my back-pack from my arms, swinging it deftly onto his head. He glanced at my ticket, spun around and without a word, headed for the station. I found myself hard-pressed to keep up with him as he nimbly dodged through the crowds. I watched as my backpack, which had seemed so heavy to me, bobbed effortlessly in and out of view. After leading me to my berth, he was at once lost again in the crowds. As the train sped southwards through the night, my mind went back to him several times. He seemed so little, so frail, yet each day he ferried hundreds of passengers to their trains. I was astonished that someone so deficient in outward signs of power wielded such strength.

I was reminded of what the Lord said to Samuel “People look at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart.”

Judging physical ability, based on appearance, leads to wrong conclusions. This was not the first time I had met an outwardly ‘frail’ person, only to be amazed by their resilience.

If we get things wrong when looking at the ‘obvious’, how much more so will we be mistaken when it comes to those things known only to Him?

We're reminded that we'll encounter spiritual strength and depth in unusual places. Just as the Lord provided a leader of stature for His people at their hour of great need, so too will He provide us with partners of spiritual maturity and strength if we will allow Him. That night at Delhi station, I could have ignored the porter – “I'm strong enough to manage this backpack myself” - and struggled to the train on my own. I may have missed the train – I'd certainly have been the worse for wear if I'd found my berth unaided.

It was a humbling experience to watch that tiny porter lift my pack as if it weighed only a few pounds. I felt ashamed that despite being far bigger than him, it was I who was the weaker person. The Lord sends us reinforcements, but we need to be humble, allowing them to minister to and with us. They may seem like improbable partners, based on their lack of qualifications or training, but He has equipped them according to His own mysterious purposes to strengthen us and help us. The Leprosy Mission has a great vision: “Leprosy defeated, lives transformed” - a vision which we can't achieve without His blessing. We need ‘porters’ – people who will help carry this burden. Ask the Lord to help you look past their seeming ‘frailty’ and allow you to see the spiritual strength they have to offer to you – and ask Him to grant you the humility to allow them to walk with you.

**Peter Laubscher** Country Leader, Southern Africa. Peter and Elizabeth Laubscher have worked with the Leprosy Mission since 1981. They are blessed with three children. Peter cruises the waters of False Bay when he's not trying to polish scratches out of telescope mirrors.



## Look back at your life and know your God

### *Exodus 33 verses 18-23*

We all have favourite verses in the bible, we often want to read them to give encouragement, to motivate us at the times when we go through the troubled waters in our own life and there are times we are overwhelmed by God's goodness and mercy and we want to kneel down in praise. We have our favourites, either in the Book of Psalms or in other books of the Bible to connect us to God's presence.

I am no exception to this. I too have many verses in the scriptures which I read again and again to remind myself my attachment to God.

Today's reading made me stumble many times wondering what is happening here that Moses was asking to see the glory of God and God was replying to Moses to look behind. I tried to work out the link. I didn't get it. That made me read this passage many times primarily out of curiosity. It is now in my list of favourite verses.

Moses had spoken to God in the burning bush and on Mount Sinai when God gave him the Ten Commandments for the Israelites to follow, and through many miracles that Moses performed in Egypt and in Sinai in the wilderness. We are told that *"...the Lord used to speak to Moses face to face, as one speaks to a friend."* Ex 33,11. Even after all this, Moses wanted more assurance from God. He asked God to reveal his presence in all His glory. God's response was 'as my glorious presence passes I will cover you with my hand until I pass by and then I will remove my hand for you to see my glorious presence from behind'.

This is true in my life too. Many times I asked Jesus, "Show me that I am doing the right thing" or "Do you want me to do what I am doing?" By asking these questions I was trying to find out whether God's glorious presence was with me or Not. The response is the same today and always, God is urging me and all of us to look back and see that he has been with us, to see His glory revealed in Jesus and to know that He is with us now and will be with us always.

### **Gladstone Worthington**

Head of Finance at The Leprosy Mission International. Has been working at TLMI office for 25 years.





## We are part of a bigger story

We live in a world where people believe that it is being intolerant to claim that there is only one truth, a postmodern culture that claims that there are many truths to a fact. A world where the collective 'we' no longer makes sense, and the individual 'I' is prominent. As a result, people's stories and subjective perspectives are increasingly valued. Less and less people believe there is a bigger picture, a plotline that explains the universe and why we are here.

But God has a certain and a good plan, revealed in the Bible. And we are here to tell them about this story. At TLMNI we have recently taken time together as a staff and board to reflect on the identity, purpose and future of TLM as a mission, at a time of transition for the office, for TLM as an organisation, and the world of mission in general. Some of the questions were: what does a mission look like in the 21<sup>st</sup> century? How can we be part of God's integral mission, both proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ and showing love to those affected by leprosy? How can we abide in Christ?

*I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing. John 15:5*

The starting point in order to abide is to stay rooted the Word of God. As Christians we need to make sure we grow in our understanding of the Bible's message, that we understand how all the books fit in the unfolding story, and know what to do with all the parts and verses that excite us, as well as other parts we struggle with. By remembering the bigger story and being able to place ourselves within the plotline, we are able to say what God's overarching plan is : God had a plan from the beginning of times to reconcile us with him and to make us his children through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ at the cross. When we forget that story ourselves, we lose the plot and become blurry in our statements. When we remember this bigger story, we point people to Jesus who is coming back to judge the earth and we regain the sense of urgency of our work.

Have you ever heard of 'the rope illustration'? The timeline of the bigger story is like a rope. Our life on earth is only a few inches on this rope. When we die, this rope goes on forever. For some it will lead to life eternal with God, to others to hell, a place of judgment, suffering and separation from God for all eternity. Let's make sure that as a mission we point the people we care for during this life to Jesus-Christ. Let's be bold and obedient to God in this. On the Day of Judgment, all that will be relevant is our obedience in pointing others to Christ by proclaiming the gospel and caring for them with love...

### **Aude Ingrand.**

Born in Paris, trained as a teacher and have worked as a Civil servant for the French government administration. Three years ago, I have moved to Belfast to study. Passionate about languages and cross cultural mission. I have recently started to work at the office in Northern Ireland (July 2015). It is exciting to be part of the mission at a time of transition and I look forward to see how God is going to lead TLM in the future.



## The Kingdom and Committees

*Where two or three are gathered together in my name, you can be sure that I'll be there (Matthew 18:20 Message version).*

These are familiar words and were often on my mind when I attended a TLM Board or committee meeting - and I attended many such meetings in more than 20 years as a TLM trustee!

These meetings always began and ended with prayer. Opening prayers usually involved giving thanks for bringing everyone together, sometimes for Skype or teleconferencing technology, and praying for wisdom and the guidance of the Spirit throughout the meeting. Closing prayers usually involved thanking God for guiding the meeting, asking His blessing on the decisions taken and praying for travelling mercies as participants left for home - or strength as they moved on to another meeting!

Attending TLM meetings when I was in secular employment, where opening and closing prayers are not part of committee meetings, was refreshing. But does it make a difference? To try and answer that question, I offer some suggestions for reflection.

Firstly, and perhaps most importantly, I believe that when we come together for a committee or board meeting in TLM we do not come together simply by chance. We were chosen long ago for the role and for the particular matters to be discussed. That should encourage in us a spirit of confidence.

Secondly, whilst we may bring particular expertise to the discussion - financial, legal, medical and so on - we rely on Godly wisdom to enable us to reach the right decisions. That should encourage in us a spirit of humility.

Thirdly, whatever our differences - cultural, ethnic, denominational, gender - we are all made in God's image and should seek only to serve His kingdom. That should encourage in us a spirit of fellowship.

It is always my prayer at the end of a meeting that, however difficult or significant the issues discussed, the decisions taken should advance God's kingdom and we should be glad that we came to the meeting - in that order!

**David Parry**

TLMI Chairman 2009-2013



## Disability is not weakness

*But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me. 2 Corinthians 12:9 NIV*

When discussing 'disability' 2 Corinthians 12:9 is often quoted. I have dyslexia and as a person with a disability the use of the word 'weakness' within the context of disability concerns me. If anything I feel that having a 'disability' often makes a person stronger, more resilient and more self-sufficient. While the world adapts to some degree (with barrier free interventions etc) more often than not it is persons with disabilities who must adapt to the world – using their initiative to adapt to their context.

Stigma and the idea of disability as 'weakness' persists across the world and no less in so called 'developed' countries. When I was diagnosed with dyslexia at the age of nine my mum told the head-teacher of my sister's school. The head teacher informed her that, in his opinion, dyslexia was something made up by middle class parents who don't want to accept their children are stupid. When my sister later applied for jobs as an English teacher her supervisor suggested that she should not mention in her application that she was dyslexic because no one would believe that she had written the application herself – the implication being that people with dyslexia can't possibly write to a high standard. I have been told in the past that my use of support services (use of a computer and extra time in exams) is because I was too lazy to just 'overcome' my dyslexia. In December 2015 the UK's largest sperm bank denied donations from men with dyslexia quoting their 'policy' to "minimise the risk of transmitting common genetic diseases or malformations to any children born". The bank was challenged with people citing the well documented contributions of famous dyslexic people including Sir Richard Branson, Albert Einstein and Steve Jobs. As a person with dyslexia it was of course distressing to read that the people in charge of determining the acceptability of donations essentially wish that people like me had never been born.

When we are able to combat this stigma and ensure we are inclusive of people with disabilities they thrive and society as a whole benefits. Rather than always discuss the 'cost' of inclusion we should discuss the 'cost' of exclusion – that society does not fully benefit from the talents, skills and contributions of people with disabilities. I and my two sisters all have dyslexia. At the age of seven years old I could not read even a two letter word. At the age of twenty four I received my Master's Degree. Both my sisters are now English teachers. This shows what can be achieved when we are inclusive and when we nurture children with disabilities in a environment without stigma and where there is a belief that they can achieve their goals and that their 'disability' is not a 'weakness'.

This is not to say it is 'easy' to be inclusive. People now often assume that dyslexia is no longer a challenge for me because it is a 'hidden' disability and because over the years I have learned techniques to manage and mitigate for it. However, I still often find certain tasks very challenging and accept that they will take me much longer than some other people. For eight years whilst in 'mainstream' school I also attended the Bristol Dyslexia Centre for two hours twice per week where specialist teachers provided me with training and support to learn techniques to help me mitigate the challenges associated with my dyslexia. My attendance was paid for privately by my parents as this support was not funded by the Government. So when people now don't always 'see' evidence of my dyslexia they often do not know how much time, work and effort went into 'coping' with the challenges of dyslexia.

Disability is not 'weakness' – it is difference and often it is strength. In my life and work people have asked me how I sometimes come up with innovative or different ideas and perspectives. The answer is, in part, because I am dyslexic – because I see the world differently and whilst this does cause challenges it is also a gift and a strength. When we as a society are adaptable enough to embrace difference we become stronger. Jesus was a mode of inclusion – whilst society shunned people with disabilities and saw only 'weakness' Jesus embraced and empowered them. The only 'weakness' is when we are not inclusive. When we as a society miss out on the God-given gifts and talents of people with disabilities and are weaker because of it.



## But the greatest of these is love...

*1 Corinthians 13:4-7 (NIV)*

*<sup>4</sup>Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. <sup>5</sup>It does not dishonour others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. <sup>6</sup>Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. <sup>7</sup>It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.*

Paul founded the church in Corinth and a few years later he heard disturbing reports of the state of the church. He wrote to them to try and correct their teachings and restore the church to its foundation – Jesus Christ.

My pastor recently started a series of sermons on 1 Corinthians 13 and last Sunday he focussed on verses 4-7. This chapter focuses on the spiritual gifts of the believers and emphasises the greatest of these gifts – love. This agape love is love in its fullest and most extensive. The verses above speak of what this love should be like. As I thought about these verses I thought how hard it is to live up to this standard of love. Paul wrote to encourage the believers not to rest until they have obtained all these qualities. This is a challenge to us also. Surely this is the love that Jesus has for mankind and that God, our Father, has for us. This genuine Christian love is the answer to many problems in the world in which we live.

My church is involved in a project called 'The Winter Shelter' which runs over 3 or 4 of the coldest months of the year. A dozen or so churches open their doors nightly to a group of 15 homeless men who have been referred from local homeless agencies. The men are welcomed, given a hot meal, clothing (as needed) and a bed for the night. In the morning they have a cooked breakfast and later that day will go the next church on the rota for accommodation and food. As we provide for the physical needs of the men we are aware of their spiritual needs – the need for their salvation, to know the love of Jesus and we pray for opportunity in conversation to share this love with them. It was so moving a few weeks ago to see a Jamaican gentleman, homeless for 12 years, moved to tears at the kindness shown to him when he first came to the shelter – to have food, a roof over his head and even a pair of size 12 shoes as the ones he was wearing did not fit him properly.

The Leprosy Mission shows this love on a daily basis to needy people affected by leprosy in many countries. It is such a blessing to be a Christian to be able to show God's love to those around us through our love, our actions and our faith.

### **Shân Adetutu**

Administrator at The Leprosy Mission International, Brentford since April 2007.



## Threefold Peace

**Colossians 3 v 15** *Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful.*

**Isaiah 9 v 6 (b)** *He will be called Wonderful, Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.*

The Prince of Peace has come yet as we look around the world today there seems to be few signs of peace. Many individuals struggle to find peace of mind; next to road traffic accidents suicide is one of the main causes of death in young people. Newspapers report murders, terrorist attacks and mass migrations of people fleeing war, desperately trying to find places of safety and peace. Yet Jesus promises, *“in me you will have peace” (John 16 v 33)*. I believe that promised peace is three-fold:

### 1. Peace with God – peace of spiritual order

We were created to be dependent on God but we were required to be obedient. Disobedience started in the Garden of Eden and man turned against God. God cannot compromise His own standards and sin must be punished. God’s love provided the way for our sin to be punished and in Christ our sin is judged and punished so that we can be forgiven. In the upper room when Jesus appeared to his disciples he said “Peace be with you” and showed them his nail pierced hands. No matter what we have done in the past we can ask forgiveness and be at peace with God.

### 2. Peace of God – peace of psychological order

Once we are at peace **with** God we can experience the peace **of** God in our lives, however, we allow many things to rob us of that peace. We often worry about money, our families, jobs, health problems etc. Tragedy can strike any one of us and life can be very unfair. Sometimes it is difficult to understand why God allows certain situations but we must remember that God is in control and is committed to our eternal good. We need to fix our eyes on eternity rather than the immediate future and when we struggle to understand situations and cannot see the bigger picture we can look for small signs of God’s presence in our lives. We need to learn to trust God with our lives and focus on what is good.

### 3. Peace on Earth – peace of social order

We live in a world of broken relationships, be it between individuals or nations and one of the biggest robbers of our peace is lack of forgiveness. Lack of forgiveness can shackle us to people in our past and situations in our past but with Gods help we can forgive those who have hurt us and be unshackled from a painful past.

*God reconciled us to himself in Christ and has given us the ministry of reconciliation. (2 Cor 5 v18)*

The Prince of Peace is at work in the world today in the lives of millions bringing order and purpose, bringing peace between God and man. We are witness to the fact that man can be at peace with God and can experience that peace which passes understanding.

Peace one of the fruits of the spirit and as such needs to be nurtured and cultivated. The Holy Spirit produces each fruit of the spirit but we have our part to play. We need to regularly examine our own lives:

1. Make sure that our relationship with God is right
2. Psychologically make a conscious effort not to worry, trust God more and try not to be afraid.
3. Make an effort in all our relationships and be willing to forgive others.

I pray that as God’s children we will be witnesses and instruments of his peace in a world where peace is badly needed.

**Alison McDonald**, previously a Physiotherapist with TLM in Bangladesh, retired Chair of the Board of TLMS and currently a volunteer speaker with TLMS.



## The donkey King...

### *Matthew 21: 5*

Sometimes I do not want to wake up in the morning, am (still) tired from what life brings day after day: endless streams of people in need: leprosy, disability, reject or sheer loneliness;

Sometimes I get so weary from the hopelessness of all those women having to live a life of hardship, having to live without a husband (that has died or that has abandoned or divorced her because of poverty, a second wife or of her disabled children);

Sometimes I get so angry and frustrated about the lust for money, the endless search for more and more, the injustice (one day of per diem of the 'grand' is a month's salary of a night guard...);

Sometimes it makes me weep to see young children suffer of serious diseases and parents accusing them to be possessed by the devil and refusing to give them any medical care...

What can we do?... How do we go about it? What would Jesus do?...

In an environment where the differences are painful (physically and emotionally), where TLM works with the poorest of the poor, the rejected, the 'thrown out' of society, there He is... sitting on a donkey, riding, weeping into Jerusalem...:

*'See, your king comes to you, gentle and riding on a donkey, on a colt, on a foal of a donkey...'*

**He** is our King, riding on his donkey, the mount of the poor. **He** is the one we are following trying to live out in our daily life and work.

Let's prepare His way by throwing off our clothes, our images, our 'self-esteem', and follow Him in meekness, in strength and in determination, right after Him, in His image... weeping, praying, but determined...

Sometimes do not want to wake up in the morning, but when I manage to see His donkey in the distance I try to join Him closer, and there He is, riding just in front of me, inviting me to follow Him in His image...

### **Geeske Zijp**

nationality Dutch, with TLM since 1992. From 1992-1995 in Chad, from 1995 – 1997 in Zaire (former DRC), from 1998 – nowadays back in Chad and currently its programme manager.



## **“His name is the Lord - rejoice before him!”**

*“His name is the Lord - rejoice before him.*

*God in his Holy dwelling is the father of the fatherless (orphan)  
a defender (advocate) for the widow, God gives a family to the lonely,  
He gives the joy of freedom to the prisoners” Psalm 68: 5-6*

This is my God, my Lord and my Savior: in Him I rejoice. He stands for justice and mercy. He is the Lord!

*“For whatever you did for the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me”. Matthew 25:40*

As we face a world where leprosy is a neglected disease, the challenge of many affected people is isolation and fear of the stigma linked to leprosy, which may persist even after completing treatment and leads to despair. Even those who never had the disease may feel isolated and in despair, for their hope of finding someone who cares was smashed as they realized the indifference of those around them. Is there no one who care for me?.

We live in a world that is hurting and where people need to know that someone cares, really cares about them. To care means to have consideration for others, it leads to thinking of what it means to put yourself in their place, just like Jesus always did. The result is building the kingdom of God, where in God's presence we live a new reality, we see justice and peace, we see the light of God illuminating our lives.

The Psalmist says it well, God is the father of those who have no father, he defends those who have no one to speak for them, he gives a family to those who are lonely and he gives joy of freedom to those who are captives. For me this is the reality of God's Kingdom, and our Christian community is challenged to make this real.

How can it be done? Give- Act and Pray- (Fill the GAP between the world and God's Kingdom)

His name is the LORD, rejoice in his presence for He will make it happen!

As we prepare our hearts for Easter, may we rejoice, for the Lord our God is a living God who cares for you and for me. He gave his life because you are unique and priceless and HE has a purpose for you in life.

### **Dr Jean-Pierre Bréchet,**

MD; Medical Consultant and retired TLM Country leader for ANGOLA.

Member of the Spiritual Ministry MAWG,

I have been with TLM for 10 years and with ALM for 15 years.

Today I am Leprosy Project Director for Solidariedade Evangélica, a local registered NGO in Angola.

Previously I have been a missionary for the Swiss Alliance Mission- SAM, in Angola, since 1978.

**Don' forget to arrange who you will be praise singing with, on skype, on Easter Monday!  
Let them know TODAY!**



## START FROM AMEN

In a previous workplace they were very fond of laminated posters. They were displayed everywhere; in the corridors, meeting rooms, kitchen cabinets, any available space even the backs of the toilet doors, which proved a surprisingly good marketing vantage point! These posters communicated important information such as the latest campaign action, to prayer meetings, and there was once a poster sharing 'a teaspoon amnesty- a request to return all teaspoons to the kitchen with no questions asked'.

One team decided to laminate each of the letters of their name and proudly stuck it next to their area. Sure enough, one morning somebody had rearranged the letters to make up a different phrase. It became an amusing past-time, to see what clever or nonsensical phrases would appear each day.

One day I arrived to the office to find that someone had rearranged the letters to form the phrase "START FROM AMEN". This particular phrase stuck with me and more importantly made me pause and reflect on the following:

What would my prayers be like if my starting phrase was "So be it Lord"? How would this change the way I prayed? If at all? Not that I would fall into fatalistic resignation like the song 'Que Sera Sera, whatever will, be will be'. Instead it's God's agreement that I should seek in my actions, thought life, dreams and ambitions; 'it's not my will Lord but Your will in my life.'

This 'so be it' response is one that is repeated throughout the Bible from the Old Testament prophets, to the disciples; it could be described as a prayerful attitude leading to a yes to God lifestyle. I'm inspired by Mary's response to the Angel of the Lord's declaration over her in Luke 1:38 when she replied, "I am the Lord's servant. May everything you have said about me come true." What an amazing way to live out 'Amen'.

I'm conscious that when I pray I'm sometimes simply asking God to rubber stamp his approval on all my plans and activities that I've come up with. Starting with 'Amen' perhaps means that I spend a bit more time involving God in my decision making and activity planning from the outset. God wants to be involved in the start, middle and the end of all that I do. Not just the, 'bless these plans' and a quick 'thank you' prayer at the end. Starting with Amen praying becomes a way of co-creating together with God.

This prayer Starting from 'Amen' reminds me of the countless prayers that have been and are yet to be uttered throughout the millennia. My prayers are flowing into and out of a constant agreement with the triune God. Agreeing with who our Father is, acknowledging His greatness and faithfulness in any situation through the power of the Holy Spirit; and praying with the perspective of remembering the promises of Jesus Christ the Son of God. As it says in *2 Corinthians 1:20: For no matter how many promises God has made, they are "Yes" in Christ. And so through him the "Amen" is spoken by us to the glory of God.*

So perhaps as you pause to reflect on this phrase of 'Start from Amen' you too may be inspired to pray with a different perspective, and start to agree with God at the beginning rather than at the end of your prayers.

### Sara Kandiah

joined the Mission in February 2015 as Global Support Officer. Sara is passionate about social justice issues and has a wide range of interests from creative writing to campaigning about environmental issues.





## Feet ready for work

We ask our patients to wear shoes or sandals even indoors, but many leprosy-affected people do not want to use footwear inside their homes as they believe it is bad manners: they like to protect their homes from being “contaminated” by dirt from the outside world. This custom is not only about hygiene but more about the symbolism. The problem of protecting sensory-impaired feet may be overcome by having a separate pair of footwear for indoor use. For Hindus this would have to be made of non-leather material. It is even more important for our Hindu and Muslim brethren to remove their footwear before entering a place of worship, and they may wash their feet at the threshold to ensure no “contamination” from the outside world enters their holy place. This is a sign of piety, and of separating the mundane from the sacred space.

The Lord asked Moses to remove his footwear when he met God in the open. He asked Joshua to do the same *“because the place where you stand is Holy”* (1,2): it was Holy by virtue of God’s presence, and presumably that spot remained sacred only for the period God was manifest there. King David, at a critical time, “went barefoot and bareheaded” to meet the Lord in humility. In bare feet one feels vulnerable, one’s soles are at risk of injury from stones and thorns, but also one is conscious that one’s unprotected extremities may be trodden on (hence the significance of the phrase “stepping on someone’s toes”!). In bare feet one cannot feel as proud and independent as when one wears smart shoes or sandals. I am sure Moses and Joshua and David felt vulnerable as well as humble before God!

In some Christian churches it is also the practice to remove shoes at the threshold. This is rare in European countries. In England we are often reluctant to walk barefoot even for short distances, but perhaps our men removing their hats as they enter a building reflects the same idea of “not bringing indoors anything of the polluted outside world”.

In hospitals we are used to having a specially-clean area for performing surgery, so for going into the operating theatre we remove our own shoes and put on clean sandals supplied for the purpose. This renders our feet more acceptable to enter the “clean area”. When my sister-in-law worked at an agricultural infectious diseases research establishment in England, she was not allowed to walk on farmland (even after changing out of her work shoes) lest she introduce some germs to the farm animals. And when there was an epidemic of “foot and mouth disease” amongst cows & pigs in UK, no-one at all was allowed to use those footpaths which crossed pastures which might be used by farm animals. We had to strictly observe this discipline.

So we have seen there is a place for barefeet in sacred spaces, and a place for clean coverings on our feet at appropriate times, and a place for forbidding any walking by human feet (covered or not). But meditating about footwear led me to another idea: when is it we should wear shoes? Wearing shoes makes you ready to act. The Israelites were to eat the passover *“with sandals on feet and staff in hand”* ready to leave Egypt (6). When He sent out the first batch of disciples, Jesus wanted them to be ready to travel, so He said “they might wear sandals but not a second coat” (4) and presumably they were not to carry spare shoes, which would have been as indulgent as taking a spare coat. I do not think the Lord wanted His followers to wear big boots suitable for kicking things (or people) around, boots which are noisy and threatening. The epistle-writer tell us that we should “have feet shod with gospel of peace” (5) which I imagine will mean shoes which give quiet footsteps and leave only gentle footprints in the land as they pass by, shoes which will not hurt anyone else. Let us pray with Zechariah (7) for the Lord to *“Guide our feet into the way of peace”*

1. Ex 3 v 5

2. Joshua 5 v 15

3. 2 Sam 15v30

4. Mark 6 v 9

5. Eph 6.15

6. Ex 12 v 11

7. Luke 1 v 79



## Washing feet

### *John 13 v 3-5 (and following verses)*

Washing feet is for many Christians a spiritual concept, a metaphor for showing humility. But for many TLM staff it is a piece of practical work to be done daily, without thinking about its spiritual connotations.

I have been pondering on 3 situations : washing another's feet, having one's feet washed by others, "having our feet washed" by Christ.

My first experience of washing other people's feet was as a school girl helping out at a Girl Guiding camp for young adults with cerebral palsy. I was glad to do this small service as I saw that these women could not manage the task for themselves, it was (for me) no different from helping them by fetching their meals or erecting their camp beds. Later in life I was caring for my Father during his last illness, and washing his feet for him was more than an item of home nursing, it was an act of love. While working abroad with TLM, often I saw nursing staff washing feet of patients in clinics and wards, simply as part of their job..... and sometimes I heard the Hindu patients express surprise and appreciation with the words "our people would not do this". They were not making a comment on racial habits but on the way mission staff behaviour differed from common local practices (it would be usual for strict Hindus to avoid touching someone else's feet which are considered ritually "unclean", except in the situation of having to make an abject apology to someone by literally "touching his feet". The staff's willingness to touch their feet, even if they were ulcerated, made a big psychological impact on many patients.

Having our feet washed by others can be difficult for us, especially if we are proud of our personal independence. When I had been angry with one of my feet for its persistent troublesomeness after an accident, I was deeply affected by the kindly way a physiotherapist handled my foot: she was not washing it but massaging it, in a professional way but with a loving attitude which told me I should think more kindly of this misbehaving part of my body! A few years later when on furlough in rural Sussex, I attended a Maunday Thursday service at a small village church where ritual Foot Washing was part of their tradition ( and none of the feet exposed for the Washing was at all dirty!). Done in a dignified symbolic way it was another moving experience. More recently I visited a women's refuge (run by TLM) in which I had taken great interest from a distance: it was the end of a day going to clinics in a saree and sandals, so I was hot and dusty from head to toe. Without any advance intimation, I was sat down on a bench in front of a bowl of cool water, while a resident knelt to wash my feet as a sign of gratitude. Physically this was refreshing, but spiritually it was very humbling for me, accepting such a personal service from someone whom I would have sought to help in some way.

Christ wants to care for us, to refresh us, to show love to us. I believe when he washed his disciples' feet it was not "just" a visual aid for a spiritual lesson, but probably started as a spontaneous act of kindness as He realised it was His last evening as a man amongst friends. A bit like my English Mother brushing and plaiting my hair for me when I was leaving for 3 years to work in India, a sort of loving farewell gesture. But on the spiritual side, I think that there is something about Christ asking a disciple to sit down and remove his shoes- doing that puts you (the disciple) in a vulnerable position from which you cannot easily run away. You may appear defenceless. Does it feel a little like offering your one-time foe your right hand in friendship, showing that it does not hold a weapon? If we seat ourselves before Christ, shoeless, we are exposed to whatever He brings, to all His goodness, to His teaching and to His example. Having done that we may never again want to run away.

**Dr. Cynthia Ruth Butlin, known as Ruth.** British (63). My service with TLM is as follows: 1981- 1982: sponsored by TLM for 1 academic year at All Nations Christian College in Hertfordshire, UK. 6 weeks of linguistics course. 1982- 1991: Medical officer at Richardson Leprosy Hospital Miraj, in India, under Dr PD Samson. 1991- 2001: medical superintendent at Anandaban Leprosy hospital in Nepal. March - June 2001: Furlough. June 2001- 2003: Superintendent Purulia leprosy hospital and homes, West Bengal in India. 2003- 2007: Medical advisor at DBLM (hospital and field programme), Nilphamari, Bangladesh (then ended my time as expatriate staff). 2007-now Voluntary speaker for TLMEW. 2013- now, skilled volunteer, sponsored by TLMEW, mainly working for DBLM hospital and rural health programmes in Bangladesh (also some work for TLMNepal)



**“If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me”**

*Matt 16,<sup>24</sup>*

The cross is a symbol of suffering and death. Also a symbol of love and hate.

It is also a symbol of giving. Jesus held nothing back. His love poured out freely for us. God so loved the world that He gave His only Son that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life. John 3,<sup>16</sup>. It is also a symbol of victory and life. Jesus broke the bonds of death, sin and Satan, and rose from the dead on that glorious resurrection morning. Jesus was insulted but chose not to retaliate, and when suffering made no counter threats. He is our example and the Lamb of sacrifice.

His arms although outstretched on the cross, are also outstretched in love toward us, so that we can rest in the knowledge that we are accepted by Him. Every Good Friday I read Isaiah chapter 53 and the amazing sacrifice prophesied there given many years earlier.

I remember one Good Friday when I worked in Bhutan we decided to spend time meditating on the suffering and death of Christ. There were very few of us, and different nationalities, and then we spent time in prayer and thanking God for His great love and mercy to us. We may not have understood the languages but that did not matter. All of a sudden we felt the Presence of the Lord with us, blessing us in a special way. It was a very precious moment for us all. It was wonderful to know that the Lord meets with a few as well as in big gatherings.

After Good Friday we look to resurrection day and rejoice again that Jesus broke the bonds of death and sin and conquered the grave. How amazing it is and all done because of His love for us.

I remember many Easter mornings, in so many different places joining in sunrise services and rejoicing in the fact that we have a wonderful Saviour, glorious in majesty and power.

As He ascended back to glory, He gave the great commission to go into all the world and make disciples of all nations. Matt. 28<sup>19</sup>, and this is what TLM have been doing since they began.

### **Mollie Clark**

From 1961 she spent 8 years in Purulia, West Bengal, India; 18 years in four different areas of Bhutan, and 8 years at the International Office, London as Director for Personnel.



Your  
attitude  
should be  
the same  
as that of  
Christ Jesus,  
who, being in  
the very  
nature of God,

did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made of human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, humbled himself and became obedient **INRI** to death, even death on the cross! Therefore God exalted him to the

highest place and gave  
him the name  
that is above  
every name,  
that at the  
name of Jesus  
every knee  
should bow,  
in heaven  
and on earth  
and under  
the earth,  
and every  
tongue  
confess that  
Jesus Christ  
is Lord  
to the glory  
of God  
the Father.

**HE IS LORD!**



## On the Third Day He Will Rise Again!

### Luke 18, 33

I watched a beech tree for three days. It was outside my room in the hospital. There was not much else to see and when the only other things you can do all day is read, sleep or listen to the radio a beech tree becomes very interesting.

It was a beautiful tree, tall, elegant, silver-grey trunk powdered with green lichen. And it moved, its branches swayed in the wind. Over those three days I watched its hard tight buds develop into crinkly leaves beginning to show that light bright green that makes Spring come alive. It was a lovely sight.

The tree had been pruned at some time. A couple of branches had been taken off but smooth calluses had grown over the wounds, and they too were beautiful in a way. That was reassuring after surgery. And as I watched, the tree began to talk to me. No, it wasn't the late effects of the anaesthetic. It said to me: „You know, whatever is happening to you, the world's still out here, quietly getting on with life. The sun comes up each morning, the rain comes down most afternoons.” - it was April after all - „and nature's doing its own thing.”

It also reassured me that something, someone, somewhere is still in charge. That there is a power for good which we call God at work, creating, sustaining, shaping and restoring our world, our lives. And if that sometimes involves a bit of pruning, so be it.

The beech tree also reminded me that nothing stays the same. That in three days buds turn to leaves and that in three days new life can become a reality. Just as it did at Easter.

### Eddie Askew

Eddie Askew (1927-2007) devoted half a century to leprosy and its consequences. In 1950 he and his wife Barbara set sail for India. Eddie's first placement was in Purulia, West Bengal. In 1965 Eddie took up the post of executive secretary at TLM's office in London. His first overseas visit in this new role was to Ethiopia, where he learned of plans to set up a leprosy training centre that would benefit patients and medics throughout Africa. He offered to become a founding member and signed TLM up to support what was to become ALERT (All Africa Leprosy and Rehabilitation Training Centre). The following year, the organisation now known as the International Federation of Anti-Leprosy Associations (ILEP) was set up. In 1974 Eddie became general director of TLM. He was keen to develop TLM's work elsewhere, and took a team into the closed land of Bhutan in response to a request from its government. - Inspired by his travels and his Christian faith, Eddie found an outlet for his creativity in painting and poetry. He retired in 1987. From 1998 until his death he was TLM- vice-president, and in 2000 he was awarded an OBE. (Fiona Spence)



## HE IS LORD!

He is Lord, he is Lord!  
He is risen from the dead, and he is Lord!  
Every knee shall bow, every tongue confess  
that Jesus Christ is Lord!

He is King, he is King!  
He will draw all nations to him, he is King;  
and the time shall be when the world shall sing  
that Jesus Christ is King!

He is Love, he is Love!  
He has shown us by his life that he is Love;  
all his people sing with one voice of joy  
that Jesus Christ is Love!

He is Life, he is Life!  
He has died to set us free and he is Life;  
and he calls us all to live evermore,  
for Jesus Christ is Life.

He's our Lord, he's our Lord!  
He is risen from the dead, and he's our Lord!  
Every knee shall bow, every tongue confess  
that Jesus Christ is Lord!

**...and the time shall be when the world shall sing that Jesus Christ is King!**

***Let us sing it NOW, TLMers, in all ends of the Earth, with one heart!!***



## They dreamed about it, in Jerusalem the Church did it!

### Acts 6, 1-7

The resurrection of Jesus is the most important fact in the history of mankind. Biblical texts show us that even the people closest to Jesus during his ministry struggled to realize what they were experiencing. It is not surprising that throughout the centuries and still today, this resurrection arouses disbelief. The apostle Paul had to respond to those who refused to believe in this yet clearly proven reality. At the Areopagus of Athens, the audience listened silently to his message until he began to speak about Jesus risen from the death. In his first letter to the Corinthians, chapter 15, he demonstrates emphatically that if the resurrection did not take place, then everything collapses for the believer. But, in verse 20 he cries out: *"Now Christ is risen from the dead"* and that reality changes everything!

Yet, from the very day of Pentecost, thousands of men and women, putting their trust in the words of Peter and the testimony of the disciples, experienced a complete transformation of their lives. Among those who came from abroad to celebrate the Jewish festival of huts, many did not return home. They decided to stay with the group of Believers in Jerusalem to start a new life. Acts chapter 4 tells us that how they shared their possessions so that no one would be left out. Throughout history we can find groups of people dreaming of such sharing. Even Communism at its beginning was based on that idea. Like a famous advertising slogan, we can say: *"They dreamed about it, in Jerusalem the Church did it!"* It was not a political program nor a philosophy. It was the consequence of changed lives by faith in the risen Christ. But the pooling of their possessions was not without problems. In Chapter 6 we hear the complaints of the "Hellenists", because their widows were neglected in the daily service. That could have meant the end of this beautiful solidarity. But it has led instead to the installation of 7 Deacons, now in charge of this service. Out of a serious problem, a new ministry appeared in the growing Church of these early days. V. 7 states that *"... the Word of God spread. The number of Disciples in Jerusalem increased rapidly ..."* Many dream of such success in our Today's World.

Then, in the space of a few decades, the Gospel spread out to the different parts of the known world at the time. Throughout the past 20 centuries, despite many pitfalls and mistakes, authentic Christianity never ceased to pioneer showing compassion for the poor, the sick and the marginalized. We in the Global Fellowship of TLM are in line with what the Holy Spirit aroused in the early days of the Church. How not to remember the words of Jesus, as His disciples were offended about the waste of a precious perfume a woman scorned to spread His feet (Matt 26 v. 6-13). *"You will always have the poor ... The story of the generosity of this woman will be told throughout the World wherever the Gospel shall be preached."* The generosity of many Christians and the service to the poor, the sick, the handicapped, those suffering from Leprosy and all those who are excluded, are facts that bind us in our Global Fellowship throughout all Supporting and Implementing Countries commitment. Let us give glory and thanks to Jesus, our divine model.

### Pierre Geiser

former National Director for Mission Lèpre (TLM France)



## Faith in Christ produces love

### *1 John 4: 7-21*

Faith in Christ produces in us a capacity unknown by all those who have not had this experience: *"We become able to love God."* Look at what happens in the human civilizations, and not just in those that we often consider as *"underdeveloped."* **God's scary!** We imagine that He is just around the corner to punish us. Who has never heard that expression, *"What have I done to God to deserve such punishment?"*

God who makes Himself known through Jesus Christ is revealed to us as a God of Love. He loves us perfectly, totally. He loves us enough to come and die for us (Jn 3: 16). Human love is rarely without wanting something in return, without calculation. And if the expectation is disappointed, love declines.

Whoever experienced the love of God cannot remain the same. **God's Love is contagious!** According to John's writing in his first Letter, the revelation of God's love for us creates our love **for Him and for His commandments**. The early Christians persevered in studying the Apostles Teaching, in Prayer and Fellowship (Acts. 2: 42-47). They felt a deep need to know the One who loved them so much. This is what drove them to persevere.

***They also needed to be in the presence of God through prayer.*** From the beginning of the Church, community prayer has had an important place. They gathered to pray at set times according to what we read in Acts 3: 1 and also whenever special circumstances led them to turn to God to present their situation, ask for deliverance and courage to continue to witness for Jesus despite adverse circumstances, persecution and all dangers. Their prayer had nothing to do with what Jesus criticized the Pharisees for - when they prayed to get noticed or admired by the people. Praying together was a natural way to talk to the Lord about their new life and its consequences. ***This is a particular brand of love relationship that gives rise to faith in Christ.***

Another feature of their new relationship, ***is perseverance in fellowship.*** Fellowship is expressed particularly by the breaking of bread, perhaps an allusion to the Lord's Supper, but not only that. The sharing of bread and food began well before the pooling reported in Acts 4 that I mentioned previously. It is not an ideal to achieve but the result of the experience of the love of God (Acts 4 32) ***"The multitude of those who believed were one in heart and mind."*** And as it is stated in 1 John 5: 1 ***"Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and everyone who loves the Father also loves the one born of Him"*** No one can love God without loving those He loves!

Should we take the story at the beginning of the book of Acts literally? It is not a question of copying what they did. Should we set up the same kind of sharing Communities? Faith is not a system which we can "copy and paste". 1 John (5: 6b) rightly insists on the witness of the Spirit ***"it is the Spirit that testifies, because the Spirit is the truth"***. There is no sense in remaining a prisoner of a system or of tradition, because, as we have already seen, ***"If Christ sets us free, we are free indeed!"*** (John 8: 36). Let us be guided by the Spirit, knowing that ***"there is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves punishment, and whoever fears is not perfected in love."*** 1 John 4: 18

**Pierre Geiser**

former National Director for Mission Lèpre (TLM France)





## To Believe that Jesus is Christ, is what makes the difference

*Phil. 2 v. 1-11*

If Christ has not been raised, wrote Paul in 1 Corinthians 15, then your faith is useless; you are yet in your sins. The Christian faith is not a religion. All religions are human constructions, philosophical systems whose approach is to explain how to rise above the human condition and to obtain the favour of God or deities. The Christian faith is based on our acceptance of God who became man in Jesus Christ and humbled himself by becoming sin for us. Unlike all religions, we do not believe it is possible for our efforts to improve ourselves and to do good to the point we propitiate God.

If Jesus is Christ, then our faith in him sets us free. *"If Christ sets you free, you are free indeed!" (Jn 8: 36).* Faith enables us to seize the forgiveness that God offers us. To be free does not mean *"do anything we like."* It means to be restored to true life. We no longer need to make efforts to become acceptable to God. We do not even have to worry about tomorrow, as we are assured that God will take care of all our needs. Now we can care about God's Kingdom and Justice. (Matt. 6: 33-34)

Faith is not a "trick". The author of Hebrews tells us, faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. (Heb 11: 1). Our society wants to be able to reason, to have evidence. Faith is based on assertions that God gives us in His Word. During his second appearance to the disciples locked in the Upper Room after the Resurrection of Jesus, He came to meet Thomas who expressed doubts on hearing the statements of his companions: *"If I do not see in his hands the print of nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe."* Jesus invites him to believe, just believe! We also have many testimonies of men and women throughout history, from the time of Jesus until today, which show that faith in the Risen Christ is not a decoy. The cloud of witnesses referred to in the Epistle to the Hebrews continues to grow until today.

For a moment let's try to imagine what the history of the world for the last 2000 years would have been if Jesus had not come and so if his death and resurrection had not occurred! Hard to imagine, but it is obvious that it would have been very different. Nobody can deny that the advent of Christianity radically changed the whole of human Society. This is true even if a large part of humanity does not believe in the Gospel. This is true, even if Christianity has been deformed by the erosion of time and led many people far from the faith as it is presented in the Bible, becoming a system of thought as well as many others. Such a social Christianity without *"faith in the risen Christ"* has no more value than any other philosophy. The question addressed by Jesus to His disciples experiencing the threatening storm as they sailed in the boat (Luke 8: 25) *"Where is your faith?"* concerns each one of us in our current situations with all the challenges we face.

Let us never forget that it is by faith in Jesus that Victory will be ours.

**Glory to God!**

**Pierre Geiser**

former National Director for Mission Lèpre (TLM France)



## Authors in Alphabetical Order

## Textuarium

Alison McDonald	19 March		Exodus 3,5-23	23 March
Allan Ekstedt	7 March		Exodus 33,18-23	14 March
Aude Ingrand	15 March		1 Kings 18,41	7 March
Christine Osman	3 March		Psalms 8,4-8	2 March
Dan Izzett	6 March		Psalms 23,3	11 March
David Parry	16 March		Psalms 33,20-22	8 March
Eddie Askew	27 March		Psalms 68,5-6	21 March
Geeske Zijp	20 March		Psalms 139,13-16	2 March
Gladstone Worthington	14 March		Psalms 147,10	13 March
Jade George	8 March		Ecclesiast 3,11	10 March
Jannine Ebenso	9 March		Isaiah 9,6/b	19 March
Jean-Pierre Bréchet Dr	21 March		Micah 6,8/b	12 March
Jocelyn Williams	17 March		Micah 6,8	9 March
Joyce Ponnaiya Dr	1 March		Matthew 16,24	25 March
Kathleen Gavin	11 March		Matthew 18,20	16 March
Marta Risko	2 March		Matthew 21,5	20 March
Mollie Clark	25 March		Luke 18,33	27 March
Natalie Smith	5 March		John 5,19	5 March
Pete Garratt	10 March		John 6,5-6	6 March
Peter Laubscher	13 March		John 13,3-5	24 March
Pierre Geiser	29 March		John 15,5	15 March
Pierre Geiser	30 March		Acts 6,1-7	29 March
Pierre Geiser	31 March		Acts 16,6-15	3 March
Rosemary Tootle	4 March		1 Cor 13,4-7	18 March
Ruth Butlin Dr	23 March		1 Cor 13,11-12	4 March
Ruth Butlin Dr	24 March		2 Cor 1,20	21 March
Sara Kandiah	22 March		2 Cor 2,15-17	1 March
Shân Adetutu	18 March		2 Cor 12,9	17 March
Tanny Hagens	12 March		Philippians 2,5-11	26 March
			Philippians 2,1-11	31 March
			Colossians 3,15	19 March
			1 John 4,7-21	30 March