



Mission As Common Witness: Re-Imagining Churchless Christianity In The Midst Of Covid-19

Samuel Lalmangaihsanga

1. Introduction

According to *Gabriel Leung*, Hong Kong's leading public health epidemiologist, "The Coronavirus epidemic could spread to about two-thirds of the world's population if it cannot be controlled."ⁱ Today the world is fighting against the deadliest Virus Covid-19 and the rapid spread of Corona virus/Corona/Covid-19 across the globe has led to the shutdown of many churches, institutions and public places etc., and the living conditions of the people are stagnant, and movements become standstill. The whole world is submerged into chaos, and people are insecure about their safety zones. The outbreak of Corona virus has been infected and affected us all. It knows no race, no gender, no age, and no social status. The world has been engulfed by the outbreak of Covid-19 pandemic and took us to a sudden halt and in a matter of weeks drastic changes occur on daily activities. The imposed restrictions and lockdown measures led to unprecedented level of mass radical changes in the way of life and livelihood.

Looking at this juncture of our problems, this paper is an attempt to interpret/ reflect upon the Covid-19, especially from the Churchⁱⁱ activities being at halt and the need to re-imagine the concept of Churchless Christianity from the traditional and scholarly understanding of as Church as being stuck only with "Institutional Church", it will implement certain ideas as the experience of Church not as a physically active for congregational gatherings; the mission of God and purpose of the Church is carried in and throughout the activity of human beings and the purpose of common witness (*martyria*) through Churchless Christians during this Corona Virus Pandemic.

2. Methodology

The goal of this paper is to present the importance and functions of *missio dei*.ⁱⁱⁱ Instead of the church having missions, *missio dei* asserts that mission comes from the very nature of God. This mutual relationship that is embodied in love is one of the convergent missiological themes being articulated. Thus, *missio dei* operates out of a motivation of love rather than by command.^{iv} *Missio dei* rightly stressed God's sovereign rule even in the "war and tumult" of history, the growth of human knowledge, and in political and social movements. The church should act in partnership with the sending God, not only by world evangelization and church planting, but by directly promoting political-economic-social and human activity towards humanity, since shalom is the goal of God's action in the world.^v Churchless Christianity goes hand in hand with witnessing the missional tasks of God through *missio dei*.

3. New understanding of Churchless Christianity

Herbert E. Hoefler's idea of Churchless Christianity includes thousands of people who believe solely in Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior but who have no plans to be baptized or to join the church or follow church doctrines. He found that there are significant numbers of true believers in Christ who openly confess to faith in fundamental biblical doctrines, yet remain outside the institutional church. Chenchiah strongly says, –There is no Church, Catholic or

Protestant...^{vi} Jesus' intention was not to create an institution where people get baptized and be a member, but to create a Kingdom of God, where every believer have a new birth and becomes new creation with the help of the Holy Spirit. This concept of Christian movement is also practiced by Subba Rao of Andhra Pradesh in which Hindus accepted Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior yet still remain un-baptized within the Hindu fold.^{vii} Even M.M Thomas focused on

‘Christ-centered secular fellowship outside the church’ coping with Chenchiah's ideology on Kingdom of God. On the other hand, Martin Luther focuses the importance of baptism and doctrines, various ideologies emerged in the understanding of Churchless Christianity.

However, in today's context (amidst the pandemic covid-19) the core message of Churchless can be formulated as though the church is not physically in-active towards congregational gatherings, it continues to witness mission in various aspects of platforms through families, groups, social media, TV broadcasting, donations etc. The mission of the church during the pandemic is carried out where every human being has become a new humanity with the help of the Holy Spirit.

4. A brief sketch of covid-19 and its impact on the Church

Coronaviruses are a group of viruses belonging to the family of Coronaviridae, which infect both animals and humans. Human Coronaviruses can cause mild disease similar to a common cold, while others cause more severe disease (such as MERS - Middle East Respiratory Syndrome and SARS – Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome). A new Coronavirus that previously has not been identified in humans emerged in Wuhan, China in December 2019.^{viii}

The covid-19 pandemic has shifted churches into somewhat *revolutionary* ways of thinking to –do church^{||} and –being church^{||} today. By revolutionary it means sudden, fast, forced and very different ways of functioning; churches did not have the luxury of choices they were simply forced to close and in the endeavor to stay open they had to resort to creative ways of fulfilling its mission.^{ix} For example, the Covid-19 lockdown measures have especially brought particular challenges for the faith communities. The closure of churches and all other religious gatherings were strictly prohibited. Initially, there was huge resistance from the masses, since mass or Church gathering to pray, worship and celebrate is an integral part of the Christian faith. A large number of churches have consequently been turned towards electronic platforms to reach their members and these have given a faster and inevitable rise of digital church or the church being churchless in terms of physical gatherings and congregational set up. Churches are therefore, required to adjust themselves to digital tithes and mission and organize virtual church in the form of digital sermon and worship.

5. Mission as common witness

Witness (*martyria*) is the Christian understanding of what it means to have faith in Christ. Jesus called the disciples to be his witnesses (Acts 1:8); He put this obligation to testify at the heart of his mission. They have seen and experience events and heard truths to which they are called faithfully to witness.^x At the Whitby meeting of the International Missionary Conference (1947) and the

following years, the terms *kerygma*, *koinonia*, and *diakonia* were used to define the understanding of mission. The Willingen Conference (1952) added –The notion of ‘witness’ (*martyria*), as the overarching concept, saying –This witness is given by proclamation (*kerygma*), fellowship (*koinonia*), and service (*diakonia*). As an overarching concept, –witness,” became the dominant mode of doing mission and the most –comprehensive portrayal of what mission is or is supposed to be.^{xi}

The term ‘common witness’ which was used since the early 1970s, refers to witness that the churches, even while separated, bear together, especially through joint efforts, by manifesting whatever divine gifts of truth and life they already shared and experience in common.^{xii} The International Dialogue between the Roman Catholic Church and some representatives or members of classical Pentecostal Churches came to a conclusion; the topic for the phase was Evangelization, Proselytism and Common Witness in 1997. It defined common witness as

–Common witness means standing together and sharing together in witness to our common faith. Common witness can be experienced through joint participation in worship, in prayer, in the performance of good works in Jesus’ name and especially in evangelization. True common witness is not engaged in for any narrow, strategic denominational benefit of a particular community. Rather, it is concerned solely for the glory of God, for the good of the whole church and the good of humankind.^{xiii}

5.1. Historical development of common witness in mission^{xiv}

Cooperation marked a few Protestant missions from their beginnings in the early 18th century. In 1710 the Anglican –based Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge began supplying personnel and funds to the Lutheran Danish-Halle Mission in India. In the 19th century, Christians across denominational lines formed associations, notably Bible and tracts societies, and some mission groups worked for common policies and effective home base collaboration. At least they bore common witness to basic Christian conviction. The Edinburgh 1910 World Missionary Conference stimulated cooperation among others. The World Council of Churches (WCC) third assembly was held in New Delhi, 1961 approved a report on Christian witness, proselytism and religious liberty. Its clarification eased the entry of the Orthodox churches into the working life of the WCC-itself a privileged instrument and sign of common witness.

The Roman Catholic Church’s active entry into the ecumenical movement was officially signaled in several documents of Vatican II (1962-1965), especially those on the church, on ecumenism and on religious freedom. The decree on ecumenism called for ‘co-operation among Christians’. The expression common witness appears extensively for the first time in the 1970 document of WCC-RCC (Roman Catholic Church) joint Working Group, ‘Common Witness and Proselytism’. It elaborated and updated the theme in its ‘Common Witness’ study document in 1982 and 1996.

5.2. Common witness within the family and society

In the New Delhi Assembly of the WCC (1961) where the International Missionary Conference merged with the WCC, the Council chose –Witness, –Service and –Unity as the key concepts. The work of the Assembly was divided into three sections: witness, service and unity. It took up important aspects of the concept of *missio dei* in stressing that –God is God’s own witness and that –God gives us the foundation of all subsequent witness. The witness of God was directly related to the very existence of the church, which in itself is a constant witness. This happens without any activity of the church, but only in –the reality of God’s dealing with men in Jesus Christ.^{xv}

Covid-19 pandemic has reshaped the family relationships in an unprecedented ways and forced many people to live physically with their relatives closer than ever before and in other occasions it further set apart individuals from their family members. Life in lockdown has necessitated more intimate and constant contact with our families, but social distancing measures have isolated a person or people from their friends and wider communities. The total lockdown made all family members to stay home at one time, since schools and shops remained closed, so too employees were being sent home. Most notably the intensity and high-pressure environment of confinement, along with the financial stress have escalated the burden brought by Covid-19 pandemic and further devastated the economic conditions of the family and society. This has led to a rise in marital conflicts in certain communities. Children and families are currently experiencing major tasks – social isolation, staying away from school, friends and relatives including grandparents, facing the most unsafe environment where everything is contaminated by coronavirus and we have to protect ourselves by extreme measures. This will have greater impact especially on the younger children who are in their prime stages of cognitive and emotional developments and will find it difficult to comprehend and understand the rationale for all these behavioral changes in society being put in place. For example, what are the specific forms and manifestations of the impact of covid-19 and the psychological problems developed short or long term in individuals, families, and children during and after the period of experiencing these unique life events including the lockdown and social distancing? To what extent the younger children are aware of and understand the current situations and can adapt to new ways of daily life?^{xvi}

The report of the New Delhi Assembly looked at the missionary existence of the local congregation. –The command to witness to Christ is given to every member of his church. It is a commission given to the whole church to take the whole Gospel to the whole world. It was quite clear that the missionary and the evangelistic task should not any longer be delegated to a specific organization such as a missionary society, but should be taken seriously by every congregation and even every member of the church.^{xvii}

Mission in today's context emerged out of our consciousness towards various activities placed at stopping the progress of Church activities where, we experienced Churchless Christianity and witnessing the gospel of mission through social media and TV broadcast, actions taken by Local Level Task Force through mass prayers within the family, Mizoram Kohhran Hruaitute Committee (MKHC) (Mizoram Church Leader's Committee) launched a programme of mass prayers in solidarity with Covid patients and praying for caregivers and frontline workers, and virtual church through the platform of online and Zoom services. For Mizo Christians, worship is the center to our Christian faith; in the pre-covid world, churches conduct 7 worship services a week. Worship is the prime importance for us mainly because it is the foundation of righteousness.^{xviii} Common witnessing within the family and society during this pandemic shows us the availability of proclaiming the concept of *missio dei* where, we gathered together as the people of the new covenant as a communion of unity in faith, hope and love.^{xix}

5.3. Common witness in the midst of Churchless Christianity

Although it feels strange to be physically separated, it does not stop us from being the 'church'. The church never was intended to refer to a building; but the people of God. In fact, the word 'church' comes from the Greek word 'ekklesia' meaning 'called-out ones' or 'congregation'. We are also working hard to find new ways of supporting each other and caring for the vulnerable in these particular testing times.

The San Antonio Commission on World Mission and Evangelism (CWME) meeting (1989) took up this theme and interpreted, –Christian mission is the humble involvement of the one body of Christ in liberating and suffering love^{xx} and to be called to unity in mission involves becoming a community that transcends in its life the barriers and brokenness in the world and living as a sign of atonement under the

cross. The evangelical emphasis on witnessing mission differs in a significant respect where they tend to regard unity on witnessing mission as something almost exclusively spiritual and as an attribute of the invisible church. Lausanne Conference states that 'Unity on witnessing summons to unity, because our oneness strengthens our witness, just as our disunity undermines our gospel of reconciliation.'^{xxi} Thus, the concern for this unity through witnessing mission is a pragmatic unity, which focuses planning, mutual encouragement and sharing of sources and experiences through various forms of missional perspectives placed before us by means of virtual church and the church being physically inactive.

According to David J Bosch, his concept of 'theology of laity'^{xxii} should be shaped where it is formulated in the form of the ongoing life of the Christian communities within various places especially in the context of the ongoing pandemic covid-19, worshipping within the family, witnessing gatherings which is done through various models of social media, for it is the community that is the primary bearer of mission, mission as common witness through the aspects of proclamation, fellowship and service render the role and duty upon the Churchless Christians of our present context.

6. Churchless Christianity and its movements

The theme of Churchless Christianity according to Rev. Allwin Johnson 'When a Hindu/Muslim accepts Jesus Christ, he/she does not come out of his Hindu Community, rather he/she takes Jesus in they are called the Non-Baptized Believer in Christ (NBBCs). However, in today's context of the pandemic, the issues of Churchless Christianity needed to be reformed in such a way that where the Church is physically inactive.

As early as 1938, the Near East Christian Council, a group of Protestant missionaries to the Middle East Christian Council, concluded that the best way to bring Muslims to Christ was to developed followers of Jesus who remained loyal to their Islamic social and political groups.^{xxiii} Herbert Hofer presentation of Churchless Christianity also tries to protect the religious and cultural aspect of one's faith so that there should not be disturbance or persecution or disorder to the cause of the gospel. Radio, television and various platforms of social media however, played a significant role among these churchless Christians (in today's context during the pandemic). Almost half of those who have used the medium have learned much through it. The influence of physical meeting towards mission as witnessing provided a big role in spiritual life,^{xxiv} however, as the pandemic keeps us from visiting our sanctuaries, Abraham Joshua Heschel writes:

'Sabbaths are our great cathedrals. It is natural to be afraid at a time like this. But the spiritual practice of reading Scripture within a deep tradition can strengthen our faith in the face of fear.'^{xxv}

M.M. Thomas was concerned with the implications of a church that becomes increasingly isolated from society. He therefore, encourages the idea of a 'Christ-centered secular fellowship outside the church'. He argued that a vigorous ecclesiology should embrace a view of the church that can 'take form in all religious communities because it 'transcends all religious communities'. Thomas clearly embraced the notion of Herbert Hofer's 'Churchless Christianity', but would rephrase it by saying that the church does not always exist as defined, visible community but can be formed within other religious communities.^{xxvi}

6.1. Churchless Christianity during Covid-19

Gleaning from Romans 8, N.T. Wright proposes that the church should see its vocation as one of praying as she groans with the rest of creation. Indeed, for him the 'redefinition of

‘control’, of ‘kingdom’, of ‘sovereignty’, which we find in the rest of the New Testament and particularly with Jesus himself, here reaches its true depth.^{xxvii}

N.T. Wright urges that as the church is scrambling to make sense of the global pandemic. The main strength of the church is to advise Christians to avoid simplistic –knee-jerk reactions^{||} to explain the reason for the coronavirus pandemic. He urges the church to adopt a lament, verbal proclamation and prayer stance as our primary response to the pandemic and then to go out and help those at risk, N.T. Wright is correct that –prayer^{||} and meeting physical needs are essential. He does not explicitly deny the necessity of evangelism. However, in reaction^{xxviii} to those who do it badly, he appears to believe that silence is the better way. However, at some point Christians needed to explain why they are showing mercy and compassion, whether in hospices or homeless shelters. The verbal utterance of the gospel is vital as there is a far worse danger occurring than covid-19—dying without a relationship with Jesus.^{xxix}

6.1.1 Utilizing social media; revision of Churchless Christianity during Covid 19 1.Virtual

Church: There are various online worship services conducted by Mizo Christians: Delhi Mizo Inkhawm, Bangalore Mizo Inkhawm, Pune Mizo Presbyterian Church, Kolkata Presbyterian Church, Republic Presbyterian Church, Leitan South Presbyterian Church, Chandmari West Presbyterian Church, English Congregational Church, etc. Most of them use live YouTube streaming and Zoom services to conduct online worship.^{xxx}

2. Online Zoom services: There is various online zoom fellowships which also includes a webinar hosted by different parties which even include the Aizawl Theological batch of 2016, Aizawl Theological College Online Devotion, Home Crusade through local cable tv LPS and Zonet.^{xxxi}

3. YouTube: Live streaming of sermons and conducting a Sunday school and organizing programs for mental health care has been taken through Synod Information and Publicity and Local Church Channels have also taken up certain measures to continue mission in the midst of Covid-19. Uploading and daily making of Bible verse posters by certain Kristian Thalai Pawl (KTP), Salvation Army Youth (SAY), Pentecostal Youth Department (PYD) and Thalai Kristian Pawl (TKP) had also occurred.

Thus, to nurture our congregation, family and community, today; we have more means at our disposal than ever before for finding solid, healthy spiritual aids. The continuation of mission is seen as clearly as witnessing through various means of social media. The prevalence of inter- based prayer opportunities should be taken full advantages of. Worship and church meetings are done even though the church is physically inactive, thus revision of Churchless Christianity can be seen. By using mass media we can share the words of God to the congregation immensely.^{xxxii}

6.2. Churchless Christianity and its impact towards mission as common witness during an ongoing Covid 19

Alwin Johnson argued that, ‘Jesus’ intention was not to form an institution where his followers get baptized and be a member, but started Kingdom of God, where every human have become new man with the help of the Holy Spirit.^{xxxiii} This indicate that the call to mission is to witness (*martyria*), proclamation (*kerygma*), fellowship (*koinonia*), and service (*diakonia*) and cope with the Christian condition of today which is Church being closed down and resulting in Churchless Christianity. Witnessing the continuation of *missio dei*, mission as the activities of God is continued by forms of various platforms such as worship and prayer conducted through mass media. Joel Zoramthansanga^{xxxiv} affirms that through the participation of every family, the goal mission of God is practiced which mobilized every family (to some extent) towards spiritual and psychological healing.

The continuity of the church outside of the church, defines the distinctive new humanity which belongs to Jesus, but exists outside the –empirical Church.^{xxxv} B. Darnghakliana^{xxxvi} shares his opinion on how TV broadcasting and social media had witnessed the continuation of mission in various areas, including the urban and rural places despite on how they deal with the pandemic. Thus, Churchless Christianity in the understanding towards Christians not being part of the physical church activities did not degraded their responsibility towards witnessing and proclamation of mission.

7. Potential responses from the church

From the Church's experience of responding to other emergency and epidemic situations, we know that there are three key roles the Church can play in such times to promote preparedness and resilience:

- 1) To give hope and combat fear with accurate information and encouragement through our faith.
- 2) To keep the worshipping and wider community connected, if necessary via messages, phone and online, in case of quarantine and disruption.
- 3) To show God's compassion and care to those affected in our communities, remembering that those already most vulnerable will be most affected.

As the Church, we are called to be a voice of calm and reassurance, affirming that God is with us.^{xxxvii} The church's social mission becomes more evident and more dramatic during times of crisis. We see those who continue to provide food, healthcare and homes and those who call for justice and those who call for peace, as the prophets of our time. These crises unite us as we get a glimpse of some of the challenges and uncertainties millions of people face every day. We are called to act in solidarity. The common good requires us to constrain our desires and our freedoms when they poignantly and directly hurt others.^{xxxviii}

The blessing of covid-19 may be that it allows us to see beyond our own wants and needs to those of others less fortunate. It may allow us to foster a "one health" approach and heal our Mother Earth, and it may allow us to look at our sisters and brothers from other countries and cultures as a source of inspiration and leadership. It is time we open ourselves to a world beyond our own shores and egos. If, as we have argued here, the church is meant for mission, then the church too would naturally be seen on the front lines alongside societal helpers and leaders. Thankfully, we have seen evidence of this as reports come in from across who are grappling with the crippling effects of the pandemic. Christians various places are reporting their commitment to

food distribution, grieving with the suffering, hosting online services and prayer meetings, and even in some cases preaching through social media and TV broadcast.

The true test of a global church prepared for movement will be found in the fruit of its discipleship training: the passionate commitment of every member of Christ's church to clearly and winsomely articulate the gospel to their neighbors in and out of season (Matt 28:20; Jn 17:18; Acts 1:8; 2 Tim 4:2).

8. Focusing Church strategy in post-covid times

The church is always on a mission – the mission of God.^{xxxix} The church as God's mission is one of the facets of its –being. And that mission of God in and through the church is to bring believers to fellowship together in the worship of God and serve God in serving his children who are in brokenness and suffering, in poverty and sickness, in hunger and in thirst, and all those who are outcast and homeless. In other words, the church is to manifest itself as God's mission in serving the destitute.^{xl}

Just as the church is God's mission, likewise, the church is a social strategy. Stanley Hauerwas, one of the prolific Christian ethicists of our contemporary times, reflects pointedly:

-The church doesn't have a social strategy; the church is a social strategy. This quote is compelling and critical because most churches today have institutionalized themselves so much that the church is not mindful of its -being as a social embodiment of God's people in the world but instead in existence as a structural and functional institution. The most foundation basis of the church as the -Body of Christ (Romans 12:3-21; 1 Cor. 12:12-31) manifests the church as a social strategy through the rich metaphor of Christ's body. This understanding of the church as a social strategy needs to be reclaimed.^{xli} The church should concretize these calls and teachings towards making them tangible in the lives of the destitute. Only then can the church become God's mission and strategy for the poor and the helpless. If the church conceives the biblical mandate for the destitute, the church as God's mission and the church as a social strategy can never go wrong. It is all the more critical that during a pandemic such as the one at this time, the church must reach out and serve those most vulnerable in society.

9. Evaluation

The World Council of Churches in 2013 affirmed a declaration on mission and evangelism that is entitled -Together Towards Life^{xlii} which focuses mission on multi-centered themes focusing on their own context. Mission as common witness symbolize the need of continuing mission through various platforms in the realm of Church being at arrest but still, the mission of God or the activity of God is carried out to every place.

8.1. Humanization and Mission

M.M. Thomas did not confine mission only to his concept, what he but called the ultimate destiny, but believed that mission must be understood in a broader perspective of the struggle for humanization, the historic destiny – human rights and social justice. Therefore, maintaining humanization is an integral part of the Christian message.^{xliii} The world needs a new society according to Rev. Fr. Samuel Rayan^{xliv}; the new society has to be based on gospel values primarily making the Kingdom of God here on earth as a foretaste and concrete reality.^{xlv} The need of humanization and mission during this pandemic has made us realized the suffering of humankind in all spheres of life and the necessity towards taking care of mental pain, trauma and suffering of the infected persons. We must assemble and orchestrate our resources so as to achieve humanization through our responses on mission as the values of Kingdom are communitarian love and care, equality, sharing, justice, service, humility, solidarity and self-giving.

8.2. Witnessing mission in various forms

Witnessing is carried out corporately by individual faith communities. Lesslie Newbigin speaks persuasively of the local Christian congregation as a -hermeneutic of the gospel, meaning that it is oftentimes only in the local community where the gospel is truly lived that people encounter what the gospel is really about.^{xlvi} Common witness that various Christian traditions can render is by working together^{xlvii} the covid-19 pandemic is challenging us to show love and justice in actions. Through the works of various Churches, Task Force of different localities, countless donations from different individual and help and support from the government etc, we have encountered witnessing of mission in various forms. Vanlalrova^{xlviii} and

R. Vanlaltana^{xlix} opines their views as, the works of LLTF within Ramhlun North had immensely shaped the goal mission of God by contributing towards giving and helping those in need and organizing a family prayer¹ to every families of Ramhlun North. Thus, in Romans 14:17, Paul describes the Kingdom of God with three Greek terms: *dikaioyne* (righteousness), *eirene* (peaces) and *chara* (joy)^{li} we should recapitulate mission as we serve God, our goals should be; to live in peace with others, helping those in need and

mutual edification.

8.3. Continuation of *Missio Dei* within the society

Since God's concern is for the entire world, this should also be the scope of *missio dei*. It affects all the people in all aspects of their existence. Mission is God's turning to the world in respect of creation, care, redemption and consummation which takes place in ordinary human history, not exclusively in and through the church. The *missio dei* is God's activity, which embraces both the church and the world.^{lii} Mission is a movement from center to periphery and from the privileged to the marginalized sections of society.^{liii} This reversal of roles in terms of envisioning mission has recapitulated the idea of God's activity in and through the world even if the world has faced its darkest hours during this pandemic. The ongoing method of providing gospel to every family in terms of social media and broadcasting media focuses the goal of mission, which embraces mission as wider community (Acts 2: 42-47) with a deep missional engagement with the whole of humanity.

9. Conclusion

Throughout the history of Christianity, the understanding of Churchless has been portrayed as Non-Baptized Believers in Christ (NBBCs) however; the paper is solemnly based on Church which is held at being immobile for physically congregational gatherings. Thus, the continuity of mission as God's activity is seen throughout the Christian faith where it encourages people to see the church and some Christian organization genuinely engaged in helping people in such time as this by providing them food and shelter. In times of crisis, our genuine love for others is the light to the world darkened by problems. Mission as common witness within the household church; *ekklesia* (term for secular sphere) draws the attention that the Pauline churches are not called –synagogues. Neither, in fact, are they called *thiasoi*, the common Greek word for cultic or religious meetings, the believers simply –gather mostly in private homes.^{liv} Thus the new understanding of Churchless Christianity can be understood as the continuation of mission through witnessing and proclamation within each individual or family.

The love of God is concrete that Jesus showed us by dying for us on the cross (John 13:34). Perhaps, a practice that may seem simple, but at the moment it is essential to keep our –healthy distance from other not necessarily to take care of ourselves but to take care of others. Our perspective and mission must be the common witness and we need to do what is necessary for the well-being of all.

Bibliography

- Anderson, Gerald H. ed. *Asian Voices In Christian Theology*. Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1976. Bevens, Stephen B, Roger P. Schroeder, *Constant in Context: A Theology of Mission for Today*. New York: Orbis Books, 2004.
- Blaufuss, Mary Schasler. “*Relationships rather than Frontiers: Contributions of Women-in- Mission and of Women’s Issues to the Field of Missiology*,” *Ecumenical Missiology: Contemporary Trends, Issues and Themes* Edited by Lalsangkima Pachuau. Bangalore: United Theological College, 2002.
- Bosch, David J. *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1991.
- Bush, Keith Luis. *Catalysts of World Evangelization*. Bangalore: Centre for contemporary Christianity, 2006.

- Chako, Laji. *Introduction to Christian Theologies in India*. Kolkata: SPECTRE, 2014.
- George, P.G, Y.T. Vinayaraj, *Reclaiming Manyess: Re-reading M.M Thomas in the light of Indian Christian Theologies*. West Bengal: SATHRI, 2015.
- Hoefler, Herbert E. *Churchless Christianity*. Tamil Nadu: Asian Programme for Advancement of Training Studies APATS, 1991.
- Lalhriatpuia, Kevin. "Social Media: An Alternative in the Pandemic," in Aizawl Theological College the 41st Annual Magazine 2020-2021. Aizawl: The Student Body ATC, 2020- 2021.
- Lalnunzira, B. "Pandemic and Christianity: A Christian Response to Historical Plagues and Covid-19," in Aizawl Theological College the 41st Annual Magazine 2020-2021. Aizawl: The Student Body ATC, 2020-2021.
- Lalrinthanga, H. "The pandemic and Christianity," in Aizawl Theological College the 41st Annual Magazine 2020-2021. Aizawl: The Student Body ATC, 2020-2021.
- Longchar, Wati& Eyingbeni Humtsoe-Nienu, *COvid-19 and vulnerable communities: Christian Responses*. Dimapur: North East Christian University, 2021.
- Lorke, Melisande, Dietrich Werner eds., *Ecumenical Visions for the 21st Century*. Geneva:World Council of Churches Publications, 2015.
- McLaren, Brian. *Generous Orthodoxy*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004.
- Moreau, A. Scott, Harold Netland and Charles Van Engen, eds., *Evangelical Dictionary of World Missions*. Michigan: Baker Books, 2000.
- Recker, R.R. *Notes, Appendices and Bibliography –MISSIOLOGY I: Course No. 801 "The Christian Mission"*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Calvin Theological Seminary, 1985.
- Stransky, Tom. "Common Witness" in *Dictionary of the Ecumenical Movement 2nd Edition*, Edited by Nicholas Lossky, Jose Miguez Bonino et.al. Geneva: WCC Publications, 2002.
- SJ, Kunnumpuram Kurien. *The Vision of a New Church and a New Society: A Scholarly Assessment of Dr. Samuel Rayan's Contribution to Indian Christian Theology*. New Delhi: Christian World Imprints, 2016.
- Tan, Kang-San. "Witness" in *Dictionary of Mission Theology*, Edited by John Corrie et. al. Nottingham: Inter-Varsity Press, 2007.
- Vanlalauva, H. *The Theology of John Calvin*. Lianpui Publications: Aizawl, 20220.
- Wright, N.T. *God and the pandemic: A Christain Reflection on the Coronavirus and its Aftermath*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2020.
- Wintle, Brian, Havilah Dharamraj, Paul Swarup eds., *South Asia Bible Commentary*. Rajasthan: Open Door Publications, 2015.
- Zizek, Slavoj. *Pandemic: Covid 19 Shakes the World*. New York: OR Books, 2020.

Journal

- Benn, Christopher. "The Theology of Mission and the Integration of the International Missionary Council and the World Council of Churches," *International Review of Mission* LXXVI/303. July, 1987.
- Pillay, Jerry. "Transformation: An International journal of Holistic Mission Studies" (6th October 2020) <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/0265378820963156> (Accessed on 17th August 2021)
- World Council of Churches, *Together Towards Life: Mission and Evangelism in Changing Landscapes* <https://www.oikoumene.org/resources/documents/together-towards-life-mission-and-evangelism-in-changing-landscapes> (Accessed on 24th August 2021)
- World Health Organizations, "Coronavirus Disease (Covid-19) outbreak: Rights, Roles and Responsibilities of Health Worker, including key considerations for Occupational safety and health" <https://www.who.int/docs/default-source/coronaviruse/situation-reports/20200423-sitrep-94-covid-19.pdf> (Accessed on 18th August 2021)
- World Health Organizations, "Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) Situation Report – 94" <https://www.who.int/docs/default-source/coronaviruse/situation-reports/20200423-sitrep-94-covid-19.pdf> (Accessed on 18th August 2021)

Articles

- Anglican Alliance Development, *Faith in a time of Covid 19*, 18th March 2020.
- Johnson, Alwin. *Churchless Christianity; Can there be a Christian Without Church*, <https://pastorallwin.page.tl/CHURCHLESS-CHRISTIANITY-d--CAN-THERE-BE-A-CHRISTIAN-WITHOUT-CHURCH-f--.htm> (Accessed on 25th August 2021)
- Joint Working Group between the Roman Catholic Church and the World Council of Churches *Seventh Report*. Geneva: WCC Publications, 1998.
- Putney, Michael. *Call to Common Witness* in <http://www.ncca.org.au/forums/3rd-national-forum/130-called-to-common-witness.Internet> (Access on-17th August 2021).
- Thomas, M.M. *Humanization and Churchless Christianity* <https://www.religion-online.org/book/the-churchs-mission-and-post-modern-humanism/> (Accessed on 25th August 2021)
- Zohreh Rahimi, "COVID-19 Pandemic, Children and Families in Lockdown: New Challenges for Systemic and Family Psychotherapists" *ResearchGate* (April 2020): 2 https://www.researchgate.net/publication/340756087_COVID-19_Pandemic_Children_and_Families_in_Lockdown_New_Challenges_for_Systemic_and_Family_Psychotherapists (Accessed on 18th August 2021)

Interview

- Interview with B. Darnghakliana (Pastor at Presbyterian Church of India, Mizoram Synod), 10th August 2021 at 8:05 pm.
- Interview with Joel Zoramthansanga (Assistant Professor at Calvin Institute of Theology), 11th August 2021 at 12:03 pm.
- Interview with Vanlalrova (Secretary LLTF Ramhlun North), 23rd August 2021 at 9:19 pm. Interview with R. Vanlaltana (Treasurer LLTF Ramhlun North), 25th August 2021 at 8:34 pm.

ENDNOTES

ⁱ Slavoj Zizek, *Pandemic: Covid 19 Shakes the World* (New York: OR Books, 2020), 18.

ⁱⁱ The traditional understanding of Church as Building/Institution will not be neither neglected nor rejected rather, due to covid-19 the functions/mission of church as in the Church move towards Churchless activity will be focused. ⁱⁱⁱ *Missio Dei*, Latin for –the sending of God, in the sense of –being sent, a phrase used in Protestant missiological discussion especially since the 1950's, often in the English form –the mission of God. Originally it was used (from Augustine on) in Western discussion of the Trinity for the “*sentness of God (the Son)*” by the Father (John 3:17;5:30; 11:42; 17:18). George F. Vicedom popularized the concept for missiology at the CWME meeting in Mexico City in 1963. *Missio Dei* was first used in a missionary sense by the German missiologist Karl Hartenstein in 1934. He was motivated by Karl Barth's emphasis on the *actio dei (action of God)*. Recognition of *missio dei* has opened the way to studies of mission motifs in Scripture which establish biblical foundations for mission that do not depend merely on the Great Commission passages but on the thrust of Scripture as a whole. These studies have led to reflect on the glory of God as *missio dei*. According to Vicedom's observation, the goal of *missio dei* is to incorporate people into the Kingdom of God and to involve them in his mission. Every Christian believer is called to become an active participant in *missio dei*. According to him, *missio* is now the activity of the exalted Lord between His ascension and His return. See Luis Keith Bush, *Catalysts of World Evangelization* (Bangalore: Centre for contemporary Christianity, 2006), 23-24; R.R. Recker, *Notes, Appendices and Bibliography –MISSIOLOGY I: Course No. 801 “The Christian Mission”* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Calvin Theological Seminary, 1985), 39. ^{iv} Mary Schaller Blaufuss, –Relationships rather than Frontiers: Contributions of Women-in-Mission and of Women's Issues to the Field of Missiology, *Ecumenical Missiology: Contemporary Trends, Issues and Themes* Edited by Lalsangkima Pachuau (Bangalore: United Theological College, 2002), 184-185.

^v A. Scott Moreau, Harold Netland and Charles Van Engen, eds., *Evangelical Dictionary of World Missions* (Michigan: Baker Books, 2000), 632-633.

^{vi} Alwin Johnson, *Churchless Christianity; Can there be a Christian Without Church*, <https://pastorallwin.page.tl/CHURCHLESS-CHRISTIANITY-d--CAN-THERE-BE-A-CHRISTIAN-WITHOUT-CHURCH-f-.htm> (Accessed on 25th August 2021)

^{vii} Gerald H. Anderson, ed. *Asian Voices in Christian Theology* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1976) 23.

^{viii} World Health Organizations, –Coronavirus Disease (Covid-19) outbreak: Rights, Roles and Responsibilities of Health Worker, including key considerations for Occupational safety and health [http://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/coronavirus-disease-\(covid-19\)](http://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/coronavirus-disease-(covid-19)) (Accessed on 18th August 2021)

^{ix} Jerry Pillay, –Transformation: An International journal of Holistic Mission Studies (6th October 2020) <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/0265378820963156> (Accessed on 17th August 2021)

^x Kang-San Tan, –Witness in *Dictionary of Mission Theology*, Edited by John Corrie et. al. (Nottingham: Inter-Varsity Press, 2007), 430.

^{xi} David Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*, (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1991), 511-512.

^{xii} Tom Stransky, –Common Witness in *Dictionary of the Ecumenical Movement 2nd Edition*, Edited by Nicholas Lossky, Jose Miguez Bonino et. al. (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2002), 221-223.

^{xiii} Michael Putney, *Call to Common Witness* in <http://www.ncca.org.au/forums/3rd-national-forum/130-called-to-common-witness.Internet> (Access on 17th August 2021).

^{xiv} Tom Stransky, –Common Witness in *Dictionary of the Ecumenical Movement 2nd Edition*...221-223.

^{xv} Christoph Benn, –The Theology of Mission and the Integration of the International Missionary Council and the World Council of Churches,” *International Review of Mission* LXXVI/303 (July, 1987), 397.

^{xvi} Zohreh Rahimi, –COVID-19 Pandemic, Children and Families in Lockdown: New Challenges for Systemic and Family Psychotherapists | ResearchGate (April 2020): 2

^{xvii} Christoph Benn, –The Theology of Mission and the Integration of the International Missionary Council and the World Council of Churches,”...397.

^{xviii} H. Vanlalauva, *The Theology of John Calvin* (Lianpuui Publications: Aizawl, 20220), 162.

^{xix} It is taken from *Joint Working Group between the Roman Catholic Church and the World Council of Churches Seventh Report* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1998), 27.

^{xx} David Bosch, *Transforming Mission*...471

^{xxi} David Bosch, *Transforming Mission*...472

^{xxii} Theology of laity does not mean that the laity should be trained to become –mini-pastors. Their ministry is focused on various places such as shops, villages, farms, cities, classrooms, homes, law offices, in counseling, politics, statecraft and recreation. David Bosch, *Transforming Mission*...484.

^{xxiii} Laji Chako, *Introduction to Christian Theologies in India* (Kolkata: SPECTRE, 2014), 215.

^{xxiv} Herbert E. Hoefler, *Churchless Christianity* (Tamil Nadu: Asian Programme for Advancement of Training Studies APATS, 1991), 121.

^{xxv} B. Lalnunzira, “*Pandemic and Christianity: A Christian Response to Historical Plagues and Covid-19*,” in Aizawl Theological College the 41st Annual Magazine 2020-2021 (Aizawl: The Student Body ATC, 2020-2021), 81.

^{xxvi} MM Thomas, *Humanization and Churchless Christianity* <https://www.religion-online.org/book/the-churchs-mission-and-post-modern-humanism/> (Accessed on 25th August 2021)

- ^{xxvii}N.T. Wright, *God and the pandemic: A Christian Reflection on the Coronavirus and its Aftermath* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2020), 45.
- ^{xxviii}N.T. Wright believes that many responded this pandemic and backfire against certain measures needed to follow for our safety.
- ^{xxix}N.T. Wright, *God and the pandemic...* 71.
- ^{xxx}Kevin Lalhriatpuia, "Social Media: An Alternative in the Pandemic," in Aizawl Theological College the 41st Annual Magazine 2020-2021 (Aizawl: The Student Body ATC, 2020-2021), 85.
- ^{xxxi}Kevin Lalhriatpuia, "Social Media: An Alternative in the Pandemic..." 86
- ^{xxxii}H. Lalrinthanga, "The pandemic and Christianity," in Aizawl Theological College the 41st Annual Magazine 2020-2021 (Aizawl: The Student Body ATC, 2020-2021), 74.
- ^{xxxiii}Alwin Johnson, *Churchless Christianity: Can there be a Christian Without Church*, <https://pastorallwin.page.tl/CHURCHLESS-CHRISTIANITY-d--CAN-THERE-BE-A-CHRISTIAN-WITHOUT-CHURCH-f--.htm> (Accessed on 25th August 2021)
- ^{xxxiv}Interview with Joel Zoramthansanga (Assistant Professor at Calvin Institute of Theology), 11th August at 12:03pm.
- ^{xxxv}Alwin Johnson, *Churchless Christianity...* (Accessed on 25th August 2021)
- ^{xxxvi}Interview with B. Darnghakliana (Pastor at Presbyterian Church of India, Mizoram Synod), 10th August 8:05 pm.
- ^{xxxvii}Anglican Alliance Development, *Faith in a time of Covid 19*, 18th March 2020, 1. ^{xxxviii}Anglican Alliance Development, *Faith in a time of Covid 19*, 18th March 2020, 1. ^{xxxix}Brian McLaren, *Generous Orthodoxy* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004), 116-119.
- ^{xl}Wati Longchar & Eyingbeni Humtsoe-Nienu, *Covid-19 and Vulnerable Communities: Christian Responses* (Dimapur: North East Christian University, 2021), 146.
- ^{xli}Wati Longchar & Eyingbeni Humtsoe-Nienu, *Covid-19 and Vulnerable Communities...*, 147.
- ^{xlii}World Council of Churches, *Together Towards Life: Mission and Evangelism in Changing Landscapes* <https://www.oikoumene.org/resources/documents/together-towards-life-mission-and-evangelism-in-changing-landscapes> (Accessed on 24th August 2021)
- ^{xliii}P.G. George, Y.T. Vinayaraj, *Reclaiming Manyess: Re-reading M.M Thomas in the light of Indian Christian Theologies* (West Bengal: SATHRI, 2015), 161.
- ^{xliv}He was an Indian Jesuit theologian who has contributed significantly to the Indian Church.
- ^{xlv}Kurien Kunnumpuram, SJ, *The Vision of a New Church and a New Society: A Scholarly Assessment of Dr. Samuel Rayan's Contribution to Indian Christian Theology* (New Delhi: Christian World Imprints, 2016), 177.
- ^{xlvi}Stephen B. Bevans, Roger P. Schroeder, *Constant in Context: A Theology of Mission for Today* (New York: Orbis Books, 2004), 354.
- ^{xlvii}Stephen B. Bevans, Roger P. Schroeder, *Constant in Context...*, 356.
- ^{xlviii}Interview with Vanlalrova (Secretary LLTF Ramhlun North), 23rd August at 9:19 pm.
- ^{xlix}Interview with R. Vanlaltana (Treasurer LLTF Ramhlun North), 25th August at 8:34 pm.
- ^lFamily Prayer within the community was organized twice i.e., 23rd September 2020 and 21st August 2021. ^{li}Brian Wintle, Havilah Dharamraj, Paul Swarup eds., *South Asia Bible Commentary* (Rajasthan: Open Door Publications, 2015), 1547.
- ^{lii}David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission...*, 391.
- ^{liii}Melisande Lorke and Dietrich Werner eds., *Ecumenical Visions for the 21st Century* (Geneva: World Council of Churches Publications, 2015), 192.
-
- ^{liv}David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission...*, 479.