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Dealing with despair



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Kulunduwe! Kulunduwe! Rising diva sings out of Covid-19

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ECCLESIA TODAY

MAGAZINE



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MANAGING EDITOR

Kimion Tagwirei

About Us

Ecclesia Today (meaning Church Today), is a free digital Christian magazine, published quarterly from Zimbabwe, Southern Africa.

We are inspired and informed by John 10:10, which says that “the thief comes only to steal, kill and destroy; but I have come that they may have life, and have it abundantly”.

We advance the integral mission of the Church (proclamation and demonstration of the gospel in all areas of life) through publishing inclusive and contextually transformative articles from various contributors in different denominations and countries.

We welcome new contributions; readers’ feedback and suggestions. For enquiries please email the managing editor @ kimion22tc@gmail.com ; Call/WhatsApp +263777430283.

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Editorial Note



EFZ's CCMP highly commendable

Since year 2012 hitherto today, the Evangelical Fellowship of Zimbabwe (EFZ) has been professing and propelling integral mission, employing the Church and Community Mobilization Process (CCMP).

Based on nine pillars – holistic human transformation, building relationships (with God, each other and the environment), sustainability, people empowerment, valuing processes instead of products, reaching God-given potential, managing and developing available resources, transformation of people by local churches as well as raising transformed agents of change, the CCMP was developed to empower humanity to transform their lives holistically, using their God-given resources.

The CCMP capacitates the Church to engage her community, examine their situations, observe problems and, together, work out contextually relevant ways to address identified challenges. Through the CCMP, the EFZ has been awakening the Church to realize her biblical mandate of pursuing inclusive missionary work to transform herself, and communities spiritually, socially, physically, psychologically and in related areas.

Traditionally the Church in Zimbabwe has been mainly geared on proclaiming the gospel. Commendably, the EFZ has been filling a critical gap towards demonstration of the gospel. To enhance that, the EFZ has been training Church representatives on integral mission, conducting Bible studies and facilitation skills.

To date, the EFZ's CCMP enabled some churches to mobilize resources and construct a bridge and secondary school in Irisvale, staff house at a clinic in Espezini in Matebeleland South province, preschool in Jambezi community in Matabeleland North, church building of Revival Ministries in Chinhoyi, Mashonaland West.

Courtesy of self-help groups and sustainable CCMP farming methods, livelihoods of several families in Dora, Buhera, Fort Rixon, Highfields, Tsholotsho, Rusape and many others have been transformed.

More-so, the EFZ trained CCMP facilitators in more than fifty communities who are spearheading transformative development in their communities. The EFZ capacitated community based facilitators with skills and knowledge on disaster risk reduction and developed a culture of studying the Bible in churches.

As John 10:10 states, Jesus Christ came to give life in abundance – thus, the need for integral mission is dire across the world.

Instead of waiting for political leaders and NGOs to attend to local problems that citizens are grappling with, it is recommendable for all heads of denominations who haven't adopted CCMP in their churches to engage the EFZ, get enlightened and equipped to realize progressive ministry that blends words and deeds in our communities.

Faith without works is dead (James 2:17 & 26) – accordingly, proclamation without demonstration of the gospel is futile.

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Integral Missionary Opinion - IMO



LOSING AN ARGUMENT, GAINING PEACE



Recently, before the Zimbabwean president revoked a government ban on private urban transport operators on Saturday, 7 May 2022 due to worsening transport crisis after the majority of those who had hired their vehicles to ZUPCO had withdrawn their buses in protest against poor payments and management, I boarded an unlicensed commuter omnibus from home to town and unknowingly triggered an argument that turned hotly provocative.

Seating in the front, I realized that the driver was my neighbor, and the owner of the commuter omnibus.

I jovially greeted him and asked how he was faring. In a loud voice, he said, “tight, it’s survival of the fittest – spiritually, politically and physically! They tried to force all of us to join ZUPCO, but that’s not what some of us wanted. I wanted to run my business my own way. I also hate monopolization of transport business, it’s like facing the anti-Christ who seeks to control everyone and all things. I would continue operating as mshikashika (privately and illegally) and never submit to ZUPCO.”

I sympathized with him and said that I pray for our representatives to continue engaging the government to address such issues as part of being open to business.

A fellow passenger commented that the incumbent political leaders do not respect peaceful engagements, “the only way they understand is violence, and by the way, even the Bible says that the kingdom of God suffers violence and the violent shall take it by force” (referring to Mathew 11:12).

I responded that sometimes we take Bible verses out of context, misunderstand and misfire, but my humble view is that, if the Zimbabwean leaders are violent as he perceived, citizens may not win peace and progress by using the same strategy.

I submitted that violence cannot curb violence, and progress cannot be realized by retaliation.

Charged, frowning his face in antagonism and visibly shaking like a reed in the middle of a flooded river, the man raised his head high, opened his eyes fully, and, with a booming voice, roared that Zimbabwe will never be fixed by peaceful

engagements and ballot boxes.

Subsequently, warring voices vied for space and overwhelmed the bus as others opposed and some supported him.

A conflict had erupted and dramatically grown tense, threatening to get vicious!

I humbly agreed to disagree, and politely withdrew from the issue. Shortly, everyone dropped off in town. The man of the violent perspective walked out as the winner – we lost the argument, but behold, won peace!

In a similarly hot case, two commercial sex workers once had a fatal quarrel at home, as recounted in the Bible by 1 Kings 3:16–27. One slept over, killed her baby and took her companion’s child. Waking up with a dead child besides her, the real mother argued that hers was alive, and the fellow claimed the same.

They eventually engaged the wise king Solomon and he judged that the living child could be cut into two to share them equally.

One shouted, “Yes, kill him and share us!”, and the rightful mother chose to lose the argument and win peace, and life for her baby. She pleaded with the king not to kill the child, but rather give her fellow! The King discerned that she was the actual mother and gave her the baby alive.

Such is an enlightening example of losing a dispute to win peace, and life.

When someone, or some people turn ferocious over a conflict, it is better to lose the argument as that begets peace and life.

A rigid position to always win arguments sometimes attracts violence when involved parties take the same stance.

As we approach elections in Zimbabwe, we may face several conflicting standpoints in different areas. It is wise to lose a turbulent perception in order to gain peace, and life. Even when we feel that we are right, at times withdrawing from certain conflicts is best to realize peace. Sooner or later, the king of kings – God will judge and vindicate us!

The same applies to all encounters of life – retreating and losing some arguments is wise for us to gain peace and life in stormily conflictive circumstances.

GOSPEL REVIEW

DEALING WITH DESPAIR

Apostle Maxwell Msindo is the founding and leading Minister of Christ-Life Church in Zimbabwe, which is headquartered in Masvingo.

**By Apostle Maxwell Msindo in
Masvingo, Zimbabwe**

*[We are] troubled on every side, yet not distressed; [we are] perplexed, but not in despair;
(2 Corinthians 4:8).*

Despair usually sets in when something negative, bad or terrible happens. Despair can be a result of battles in marriage, battles with sickness, either for yourself or for a loved one. It can be due to financials or dealing with a wayward child or relative. According to our abovementioned scripture, despair can result from being perplexed. However, for Paul, being puzzled did not bring despair on him. Oh, there are people who are/were able to deal with despair! I believe you can. Let us explore that which enabled Paul to withstand despair and learn how to deal with ours, and also get enlightened to help others. Firstly, two key words from our scripture need definition. What is to be perplexed? And what is despair? To be perplexed is to be without resources, to be in straits, to be embarrassed and not to know which way to turn to. It is not to know how and what to decide or what to do. This can happen to anyone. This can happen at any time and in any form. It may be happening and may have happened to any of us. The word despair, as used in this scripture, means to be utterly at loss, be utterly destitute of measures or resources and therefore renounce all hope. Yes, it is a state of mind and/or heart or a condition in life where one has lost all hope due to perplexities in life, due to situations that

seem too much or difficult to cope with. Despair is real and happens to real people for different reasons and brings with it sadness and emotional pain and the feeling that everything is wrong and nothing will turn out well. It can ultimately lead to depression. Do you want despair to run its full course on you and on your life? Do you want it to take a friend, loved one, workmate or neighbour to depression? No ways! Let us deal with it, let us arrest it! We did mention earlier that Paul withstood despair despite the circumstances that could have overwhelmed and got him desperate. Paul says, “we are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair (2 Corinthians 4:8). He goes on to give us a hint of how he dealt with these perplexities, “always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus; that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body” (2 Corinthians 4:10). That is the first way to deal with despair. In all times turn to Christ and look to and unto him. Believe him and wait on him, casting your care upon him. By so doing, Christ’s life is made manifest on your behalf, in your body, in your heart and in your mind. This will restore and strengthen your hope and break despair. I am tempted to quote the whole hymn, “What a friend we have in Jesus” by Alan Jackson for us to be encouraged to deal with despair through the One who is able.

Here is a bit of it for us;

*“What a friend we have in Jesus
All our sins and griefs to bear
.....*

*Oh, what peace we often forfeit
Oh, what needless pain we bear
All because we do not carry
Everything to God in prayer
Have we trials and temptations?
Is there trouble anywhere?
We should never be discouraged
Take it to the Lord in prayer*

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GOSPEL REVIEW

DEALING WITH DESPAIR

*Can we find a friend so faithful?
Who will all our sorrows share?
Jesus knows our every weakness
Take it to the Lord in prayer*

Paul gives us a glimpse into some of his perplexities in 2 Corinthians 11:23-27 (please read this). He also describes in detail the desperate and near-death experiences he and those he sailed with to Rome had due to winds and storms that visited and accompanied their journey in Acts 27:1-44. Paul spoke of the despair, the fasting and desperate human attempts to save lives but finally speaks of the divine intervention and assurance of their lives (v21-25).

There shall be no loss as long as you trust the Lord. We read of a beautiful end to this ordeal, “and the rest, some on boards, and some on broken pieces of the ship. And so it came to pass, that they escaped all safe to land” (Acts 27:44).

Let us not despair. Let’s sail on that broken piece to life, come out of despair, and get to safety through faith in Christ and through his presence. Paul survived the raging fury of the Emperor Nero because of the Lord’s presence, he says, “... the Lord stood with me, and strengthened me; I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion” (2 Timothy 4:17).

He concludes in verse 18 with emphatic confidence, “And the Lord shall deliver me from every evil work, and will preserve me unto his heavenly kingdom: to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen”.

That is it in the journey of life – we fall into pits, we travel in valleys and for some there will be that valley of the shadow of death.

Can this destroy us? Not at all for thou art with me! (Psalm 23:4). That is the secret of survival and overcoming despair and desperate situations – depending on the presence of God and on his supernatural hand, depending on that supernatural connection.

That is an unfailing resource, a true shield and cover. That is how one can be perplexed yet not be in despair.

Despair is possible when one is perplexed, troubled, cornered by people or circumstances. It is possible even when you are deserted by people, when you are divorced or separated from a spouse or separated from relatives.

For Paul in 2 Timothy 4:16, no man stood with me, but all men forsook me: but the Lord stood with him.

Indeed, that supernatural presence will become an assurance against despair and its effects.

Jehoshaphat knew it, when three armies came against Judah, he trusted and looked up to the Lord. Practically he was afraid but he did not allow the fear to be final and define him as well as to determine his end.

So we read, “And Jehoshaphat feared, and set himself to seek the LORD, and proclaimed a fast throughout all Judah(2 Chronicles 20:3). In his prayer he made God the judge in his situation, while he confessed their lack of might and that they did not know what to do, he did not end buried in hopelessness but showed his hope in the Lord.

“O our God, wilt thou not judge them? For we have no might against this great company that cometh against us; neither know we what to do: but our eyes are upon thee” (2 Chronicles 20:12).



Put your eyes in the right place and despair will not set in. Look not on the enemies and circumstances.

The same with David when the city of Ziklag was burnt by fire and his wives and children were taken captive. He encouraged himself in the Lord (1 Samuel 30:1-6). This was a perplexing situation and time.

How you handle your perplexities determines whether you will give in to despair or not.

You deal with despair by trusting in God, by calling upon him in prayer and by having hope against all hope.

The father of faith Abraham did not sink in the despair of having no son to be his heir but he, against hope, believed in hope, that he might become the father of many nations, according to that which was spoken ...” (Romans 4:18).

What you become depends on not losing hope through despair. He was not weak in faith, he did not consider the circumstances around him, “And being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead, when he was about an hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sara’s womb” (v19).

Conclusively, any despair can be dealt with. Let’s deal with it before it deals with us. God bless and keep you.

GOSPEL REVIEW

Keeping Christian at school



BY PASTOR ZODWA MUTISI, IN HARARE, ZIMBABWE

School is one of the most novel times which defines many people. Even at a late age, people always refer to school moments of their lifetime as the best moments.

Cara Delevingne, a popular movie actress remarked that, "I wish my school days could have dragged on a little longer, or that I could go back and do it later in life."

Whether high school, college or University - school days create and shape destinies of many people.

Some of the amazing innovations and ideas which have shaken the world can be traced back to school.

In every critical aspect of a nation's culture, the school is where we find future influencers. From spiritual revivals to political revolutions, schools give birth to change. Marxism, atheism, feminism, and practically every other "ism" that spread around the world at one time started as a tiny seed at college or university.

Since they have limited obligations, students have few restrictions on following Jesus Christ and serving him boldly.

The education institutions are not only the source of the next generation of business, government, and educational leaders, but also where we find the next generation of church leaders and cross-cultural missionaries.

Zodwa Mutisi is a Development practitioner and a Research Consultant. He is a holder of a Master's degree in Development Studies. He is also a Campus Ministry Pastor with the Assemblies of God (BTG) church in Zimbabwe. He developed passion with the campus ministry after experiencing what Christian students face and go through once they set their feet at college or university campus.

Moving from high school to college or University presents a transition that has affected many Christian students for quite a long time.

A survey by Barna in 2013 according to Laura Bailey 2021, shows that 59% of young people with active Christian backgrounds walk away from their faith or the church in their first decade of adult life especially at college or University Campus.

High school reflects the unforgettable part of a happy childhood where students are protected, loved unconditionally and free from worldly responsibilities.

University or college time presents a biggest adventure. Even when smart enough and spiritually sound, Christian students often have their faith tested during college days in an unprecedented manner.

The most fortunate fact is that in high school, there are Christian schools where mostly parents prefer to send their kids and also Scripture Union where students can serve God whilst still in studying.

Colleges and Universities, according to Budziszewski "... are magnets for extreme beliefs, ideologies and cults." From the moment students set foot on the contemporary campus, their Christian convictions and discipline are attacked.

Right from how other students dress, the free spirit nature of the environment, independent decision making, own time management and

living space. It's entirely a new environment with a lot of "freedom". This freedom is usually turned into 'free-doom' through failure to handle themselves at college.

Understanding this hidden spiritual darkness can help students remain on course or even increasing their faith exponentially during the course of their college years.

"There is no such thing as solitary Christian. If you go into the world alone, you will be swallowed" (Budziszewski, Laura Bailey 2021).

This statement hints the basic way of survival in a multicultural environment such as the college or University campus.

1.First look for a Christian community

You can always find almost anything that you want at a university campus. Almost all clubs exist. If you wake up at any time in a university campus feeling you need to party, you can always find people who are already partying.

The same applies when you wake up even at the middle of the night any day any time looking for people who are praying, you can always find them. The choice of association entirely lies with the student to choose where to belong to.

Joining a student Christian group right away or better connecting with a campus ministry before leaving home would help a lot. It would even help beyond just attending church service, but even having people who will always keep you on check and follow up on you in case you get tempted. In most colleges there are several campus ministries.

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GOSPEL REVIEW

KEEPING CHRISTIAN AT SCHOOL



Having good friends is one of the key things that one needs at college or University. Being alone is not good. There are times you may get into depression, feel low, feel like having fun away from the busy schedules at school. Friends may play an important role during these times. We are social animals, and there is nothing wrong with having fun with your friends. Young people always think that having fun is taking alcohol and drugs or engaging in sexual activities. That's not true! You can have fun without committing any sin. You can go for braai with friends, play games, soccer, there is so much you can do with friends to freshen up than you are alone. Stress, peer pressure and depression is real on a college or university campus. Good and prayerful friends may cheer you up in your weakest moments and give the support you need.

Most churches now value campus ministry to the extent that they thrive to have it on each and every college or University within their reach. There are also other non-denominational Christian groups such as Christian Union which operates almost in all colleges and Universities. Just link up! Some students intend to stay with their faith but they are surprised at what happens to them. Before they even know it, they found themselves surrounded by non-Christian friends and out of nowhere invited for a party. Once you played along that route, it's difficult to keep Christian.

2. Get actively involved or take on a leadership role

Many times Christian students who would have resolved to identify a Christian group or a campus ministry may fail to keep Christian all the same because they choose to be back benchers and unnoticeable. Openly declaring your faith and what you stand for helps on restraining you on your weaker moments when you are susceptible to temptation.

People will always remind you of what you stand for and who you are when you are getting lost if you had publicly heralded your faith. Serve in various departments of the church or the campus ministry, go for evangelism, lead the compassions department, join the praise and worship group, lead in the campus ministry leadership structures, get involved, don't just sit and watch! Of all the 22 spiritual gifts recorded in the bible, there is no gift of sitting and watch! Do something!

3. Find good and prayerful friends



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CHURCH, ECONOMICS & DEVELOPMENT



BY ESSAU MAKWINDI IN MASVINGO,
ZIMBABWE

EFZ & ZHOCD'S
DEVOLUTION
AWARENESS
IMPACTFUL IN
MASVINGO

The Evangelical Fellowship of Zimbabwe (EFZ) has been running a three year experimental devolution awareness project in partnership with the Zimbabwe heads of Christian denominations (ZHOCD) in Masvingo since 2020. The overall vision of the project is to strengthen the role of the Church in promoting social cohesion and civic participation within devolution processes. Co-funded by the European Union and Troicare, the pilot project is ending in 2023. EFZ Masvingo field officer, Pastor Nyasha Richi said that "the project is expected to continue after an evaluation". Having observed that the majority of Christian youths have not been participating in programs that are somewhat associated with secular politics, the EFZ has been running workshops about devolution, facilitated several activities such as drama, poetry, anti-drug-abuse campaigns; various sporting activities and established an annual sports competition named the ZHOCD Youth Devolution sport tournament. Pastor Nyasha Richi elucidated that the project brought church leaders together, provided spaces for youths to discuss innumerable issues of their concern,



EFZ Field Officer, Pastor Nyasha Richi



ZHOCD Masvingo District youth
coordinator, Apostle Admire
Mupwanyiwa

social sensitization trainings and possible solutions to identified problems. ZHOCD Masvingo district youth coordinator, apostle Admire Mupwanyiwa explained that such initiatives have been gathering numerous youths from different churches, building social cohesion, educating, enlightening, transforming and encouraging them to participate in devolution programs. Remarkably, the EFZ and ZHOCD aided registration of companies for youths to empower and enable them to take effective involvement in devolution programs. "So far five local youth registered their companies, and that is empowering and inspiring" – concluded Apostle Admire Mupwanyiwa.

ADAPTING TO CHANGE: THE RIVER CHOLUTECA METAPHOR FOR THE 21ST CENTURY LEADERS



**BY REV. DAVID MUGADZI IN
HARARE, ZIMBABWE**

Rev David Mugadzi is a pastor in the Reformed Church in Zimbabwe. This article is his personal opinion

Now more than ever before, leaders all over the world are facing change and complexity because the coronavirus pandemic has presented us all with new challenges, new circumstances, new uncertainties in the work place and new opportunities.

Jobs have been morphing, expanding, shrinking and disappearing; co-workers, teammates, church mates and technology are changing rapidly.

In such moments, adaptability is required, because change is constant and inevitable, therefore leaders must be flexible to succeed and to be relevant as they add value to their organisations, homes and communities.

Some years ago, a story was covered and reported by Jeff Christopherson and Prakash Iyer on what happened to Choluteca Bridge in Honduras, Central America. This story is a challenge for 21st leaders to build organisations and leadership that can adapt to change.

Choluteca Bridge is a 484-metres-long bridge over the river Choluteca in Honduras, Central America. It is found in a region notorious for storms and hurricanes. It is believed that, the governors there be, decided to build a new bridge over river Choluteca in 1996; a bridge that will withstand the extreme weather conditions of Honduras. A Japanese firm was contracted and they built a solid bridge, designed to withstand the powerful forces of nature.

The new Choluteca Bridge - a modern day marvel of design and engineering was thrown open to the public in 1998. And as people drove from one side of the Choluteca River to the other, they couldn't help but admire the new bridge.

It was Choluteca's pride and joy.

In October that year, Hurricane Mitch hit Honduras. It was a heavy downpour that left a signature of devastation and destruction. Folks lost their lives and many bridges were demolished except one - the new Choluteca Bridge remained unaffected.

While the bridge was intact, the road leading to it and the road leaving it were both swept away, leaving no sign that there was once a road there.



CHOLUTECA RIVER

Ministers of the word, and all other leaders, I urge us to be agents of change, to be pro-active rather than reactive. Looking closely, Covid-19 has changed a lot of things in the life of the church, families and organisations. I mean, conferencing, camping and fellowshiping, all has been affected.

As for the churches, what should the 21st Century church or organisation do, such that it may advance the kingdom of God, impacting the world with the principles of Christ? Redefining churches' role in post-COVID-19 world is critical for each denomination, ministry, parish or congregation. We are almost three years into a world changing pandemic, and it's now clear that many things that are changing will remain changed. So, we have a choice. We can either lament the losses that we have encountered, or we can navigate forward, by faith, into a new chapter of our God-given mission.

John Maxwell believes that everything rises and falls with leadership. As a leader, are you flexible, adapting to the changing external pressures facing the world today? Good people, inflexible leaders limit the workplace adaptability of others.

New initiatives may be halted or stifled. Indeed resistance to change may undermine critical projects or system-wide implementation, causing not only setbacks in progress, but also leading to anxiety and negative emotions from other team members.

To survive change in your organisation, industry or profession, you must first lead yourself through the process of transition. This includes finding ways to help yourself feel more grounded amidst potential negative

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THEOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

ADAPTING TO CHANGE: THE RIVER CHOLUTECA
METAPHOR FOR THE 21ST CENTURY LEADERS

emotions, understanding the impact that change is having on you and understanding the impact of your behaviour on others as a leader.

There are two types of flexibility that improves your ability as a leader to adapt to change.

1. Cognitive flexibility: leverage the ability to use different thinking strategies and mental frameworks. Leaders who have cognitive flexibility are able to incorporate different thinking strategies and mental frameworks into their planning, decision making and management. Cognitive flexibility indicates nimble, divergent thinking, an interest in developing new approaches, the ability to see and leverage new connections and the propensity to work well across the organisation. These leaders readily learn from experience and recognise when old approaches do not work.

2. Dispositional flexibility: Practice the ability to remain optimistic and, at the same time, realistic. Leaders who display dispositional flexibility operate from a place of optimism grounded in realism and openness. They will acknowledge a bad situation but simultaneously visualise a better future. They are neither blindly positive nor pessimistic and defeatist. Such leaders see change as an opportunity rather than as a threat or danger.



REV.
DAVID MUGADZI IN
HARARE, ZIMBABWE

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DISABILITIES & CONDITIONS



**BY PASTOR DR. CLEOPAS TAGUMA
NEUSO IN HARARE, ZIMBABWE**

Disability doesn't mean inability: Rethinking inclusivity in the Church

Inclusion (belonging) implies a welcoming posture, something beyond simply being in, more like being of and being eagerly taken in.

Inclusion begins with presence. It is difficult to welcome individuals when they are not actually present among you.

What does a glance across the pews, a peek into your programs for children and youth, or a look at your leadership and ministry teams reveal about the extent to which people with disabilities are currently involved in your church?

Presence is only a starting point, not a signal to stop. Once people with disabilities come through your doors, they must be able to participate in the activities and programs you offer, as well as have access to the different locations and facilities in which they take place.

Although an accessible building is essential, it is through interactions and relationships with others that welcome is truly communicated.

Hospitality can be demonstrated in simple ways: extending a greeting, remembering a name, noticing a new haircut, or asking about someone's week. But an inclusive congregation is known for more than just hospitality.

Its members invite people with disabilities to lunch, spend time really getting to know them, celebrate

and share life successes, and stand alongside them in difficult times. Here are some of the verses that sum up the inclusion of people with disabilities. Then Jesus said to his host, "When you give a luncheon or dinner, do not invite your friends, your brothers or sisters, your relatives, or your rich neighbors; if you do, they may invite you back and so you will be repaid. But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, and you will be blessed. Although they cannot repay you, you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous" (Luke 14:12-14).

Gestures must have authenticity and substance, they must offer much more than just the veneer welcome. Sharing lives entails more than just sharing space. A welcoming congregation strives to weave people with and without disabilities into common community.

People with disabilities who want to be part of a community of faith encounter a variety of barriers to full participation. Sometimes, barriers related to architecture, attitude, communication, programming, and liturgy within the congregation have the effect of pushing people to the margins or away altogether.

For individuals or families visiting a congregation, these barriers, often subtle, but sometimes quite striking, may leave them feeling unwelcome and may prevent them from returning. Other barriers, however, prevent people with disabilities from ever coming to your congregation in the first place. The following verse admonishes us against barricading people with disabilities, "Do not curse the deaf or put a stumbling block in front of the blind, but fear your God. I am the LORD" (Leviticus 19:14|).

Perhaps people with disabilities were never given an invitation, they have never been guided

in exploring their own spirituality and desired level of congregational participation. Although you may have very good intentions, you simply cannot welcome people if they have never come through your doors.

At the same time it not enough invite your neighbors through your doors, only to turn them away with your words and actions. A meaningful response will require that these barriers be addressed from both sides of the congregational doors.

If a church is inclusive and welcoming, it will definitely prove that disability doesn't mean inability. Everyone wants to feel certain that they are valued, that they matter to others. Historically, people with disabilities have been defined by what they cannot do and, by extension what they cannot contribute.

An inclusive congregation recognizes the gifts and talents in their community, including those members with disabilities, and they seek to discover and unlock the gifts and talents

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DISABILITIES & CONDITIONS

Disability doesn't mean inability: Rethinking inclusivity in the Church



Examples abound of the very concrete and visible ways that people with disabilities can contribute within their churches. People with disabilities can contribute within their churches by being assigned to do any of the following: greeting people as they arrive for worship service, being parking lot attendants, folding and passing out bulletins, preparing or serving food at church gatherings, collecting items left in the sanctuary after the service, preparing communion, counting the offering, reciting a prayer, sharing a scripture, singing in the choir and worship team and so forth.

Everyone has something unique to offer and so it is important to avoid making assumptions that people with disabilities should all serve in particular ways, whereas people without disabilities should serve in others.

Opportunities to serve should be aligned with people's gifts, talents and passions, not allocated according to one's disability label. It is quite often the case that acts of service that seem insignificant or inconsequential to one person hold profound meaning for another person.

There are some people who still believe that disability means inability. The truth of the matter is that disability doesn't mean inability. Many capable people with genetic anomalies have been denied opportunities to serve in different capacities because of this wrong understanding of thinking that disability means inability.

I know a lot of people who have excelled in various disciplines despite their disability challenges. Personally I have got a speech impediment but I was employed by the following organizations, Public Service Commission, the Department of Immigration Control for thirteen years of which on daily basis I was dealing with people. For the past ten years I have been lecturing at Trust

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DISABILITIES & CONDITIONS

Disability doesn't mean inability: Rethinking inclusivity in the Church



Academy in Collaboration with Midlands State University. My appreciation and gratitude goes to my former and current employers for taking me on board.

Above all, I am a powerful preacher of the gospel. The following verses made me realize that my speech impediment doesn't mean inability, Moses said to the LORD, "Pardon your servant, Lord. I have never been eloquent, neither in the past nor since you have spoken to your servant. I am slow of speech and tongue." The LORD said to him, "Who gave human beings their mouths? Who makes them deaf or mute? Who gives them sight or makes them blind? Is it not I, the LORD? Now go; I will help you speak and will teach you what to say" (Exodus 4:10-12). Recently Samuel Deme was appointed as the Zimbabwe's first ever high court judge with visual impairment. What a milestone achievement for people with disabilities in Zimbabwe.

In sports, there are a number of athletes with disabilities who went on to excel against all odds. Elliot Mujaji who is amputee brought home a gold medal from Para Olympics tournament. Hardlife Zvirekwi, a soccer star player whose hand was amputated because of a road traffic accident is still playing soccer at the highest level. Paul Matavire and Steve Kekana who were both visually impaired became great musicians. Nick Vujicic was born without limbs. Despite this, he became a motivational speaker and founded Life Without Limbs, an organization for people with physical disabilities. Kaisa Leka is a Finnish politician, graphic designer, and comic book artist. Her legs were amputated in 2002, but that did not stop her from pursuing growth in many aspects of her life. She was even named Cyclist of the Year in her home country in 2012. A general survey across the labour market shows that some institutions are yet to fully embrace equal opportunities because the facilities at their institutions do not accommodate people with disabilities.

As I pen off I would like to ask the following questions: Is your congregation a place of welcome, belonging, and contributing to the inclusion of people with disabilities and their families? Is your congregation truly a place of welcome and belonging? The architectural, attitudinal, programmatic, and other barriers that may push people with disabilities away from your congregation are not insurmountable, but they will not disappear without intentional efforts.

We need to welcome, embrace and accept each other despite our diversities, for there is strength in diversity. Apostle Paul emphasized the importance of inclusion by saying, "Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God" (Romans 15:7).



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LIFE SKILLS & DEVELOPMENT

WHAT'S UP? UTILIZING GIVEN TIME



**BY PASTOR GERALD CHIMWANDA IN
CHIPINGE, ZIMBABWE**

Time is a gift. It is the only gift given equally to every human being.

Somehow, it can be stolen, wasted, lost or utilized wisely. It is therefore imperative that we master the art of using time effectively.

We are all living on this earth for a particular time. We do not remain on earth forever. In the time that we have, we should make the most of it and leave an indelible mark.

Life is measured in time. The passing of time is the passing of life. When an hour passes, it's not an hour of your day but an hour of your life that has passed.

Pastor Gerald Chimwanda is a pastor with the Alliance church in Zimbabwe. He is currently pastoring Alliance church branch in Chipinge, Zimbabwe.

The same applies to a day, month or a year that passes.

This means that any moment spent recklessly is a moment of our lives wasted. We cannot afford to live recklessly, because time lost can never be regained. We must utilize our given time to the best of our abilities, so as to leave this earth satisfied and to leave an inheritance or a legacy for the families that remain behind.

The first key to utilizing given time is to identify and eliminate time wasters. These can be wrong associations, idle living or unproductive hobbies. We don't have much time to be doing just anything. Every friend or association that you keep should be contributing positively to your use of time and attainment of purpose.

We waste much time on friends that only want to 'hang out'. Many of us want to relax before we have worked. Dangerous is a friend who always suggests the need to 'refresh' over some drinks or braai and never

proposes working. The company we keep contributes to the future we create.

We also have to evaluate the activities that constitute our day. We waste time by the activities we do or lack of activities. One prominent speaker spoke against spending hours of our day watching a series film. If television if not used properly, it can be a huge time waster. When you find that you are 'usually free', there is something wrong in your use of time. You cannot be free the whole day or week. You are living idle. There is always something that you can do in your day. Everything you do must be of a benefit to you and must push you closer to realization of vision.

One thing I have noticed is when you see wealthy people in a restaurant

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LIFE SKILLS & DEVELOPMENT

WHAT'S UP? UTILIZING GIVEN TIME

or hotel, they are pushing an agenda for their endeavors. It's either a business lunch or dinner. When they play golf, they are networking, securing tenders and contracts. They are always working, even if the environment is a casual one.

To them, joining a tennis club or a specific gym is a means to an end – it furthers a certain agenda of their business empires. More-so, sleep is a great time waster for many people. The bible says "love not sleep lest thou come to poverty..." (Proverbs 20:13). It invites poverty to a person's life because it promotes laziness and idleness.

One source I once read said that "a year is made up of fifty two weeks, a week is made up of one hundred and sixty eight hours. A year has eight thousand seven hundred and thirty six hours, so if you sleep for eight hours daily, a third of your life has been wasted. By the time you are seventy five, you would have slept for twenty five years of your life". Sleep is encouraged but sleep in excess is a waste of time. Early risers are usually energetic throughout the day as compared to people who wake up late, they seem to drag their feet through the day.

The next key is to prioritize what is most important. You can do this by having

a to-do-list for each waking day. When you don't have a planned day, anything can steal a day for you. Before you realize it, the day has come to an end and you have done nothing fruitful. A to-do-list will help you know what you have to be doing at a given time. To be busy is not to be productive. A lot of people are busy but a few are productive. This is because they do anything that comes their way, they don't prioritize anything.

If you do not plan your day, then someone else will plan it for you. When you do not have a vision to pursue, people will use you to pursue theirs. When you develop a to-do-list, be disciplined enough to adhere to it. Do not compromise on following your list. You are the one responsible for designing your day in a way that brings value. Prioritizing helps you to know where to dedicate your energy the most. There is a saying that "a wise soldier chooses his battles". This means that without the wisdom of prioritizing, you can waste energy on trivial activities and take on major life changing tasks without enough energy. Most of us focus our time on trivial things like social media, films and vain talk, only to meet tasks like study or work without the requisite energy.

When you have priorities, you do your tasks in order of their importance.

Besides this, time can also be utilized well by being accountable to yourself. A good way of being accountable to self is to have deadlines for your assignments. Some people in life lack a sense of urgency in matters they address and encounter. There are people who don't mind not finishing a task. A simple task like cleaning one's room or doing laundry can take longer than it is supposed to when the one doesn't owe it to anyone to complete the task.

Growing up, I was someone who didn't have deadlines. I would be taken from my assignment by friends when they pay me a visit. I would go with those friends and leave my task unfinished, only to

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WHAT'S UP? UTILIZING GIVEN TIME

come back later and postpone everything to the following day. My mother would always tell me that I would never accomplish anything in life if I kept up with such habit. When you do not have your own deadlines to meet, you will always be helping others meet their own deadlines.

With every chance we get, we should always be learning. Self-improvement is a perfect way of utilizing time. Learn something new, always be improving yourself. The destinies we want to attain are waiting for a better version of us, not our current versions. This means that we have no time to be taking in toxic, useless information. You are what you watch, what you read and what you listen to.

I know a friend of mine who travels with a book when he is going on long journeys. He believes instead of watching the trees through the window in a bus, he would rather cover a few chapters of the book he would be reading in those days. While one is using travel time to read, another one is sleeping the whole bus ride. There are a lot of educative audio teachings one can listen to on his music player. I have a habit of listening to sermons from renowned preachers on subjects of interest. I listen as I work, as I travel, as I relax. I am constantly improving myself at every chance that I get. We get so occupied in making the most in our current self we do not see the need to improve ourselves. There are things that we want that will not come to this current version of self. Learning new skills and acquiring new information is a way to utilize time effectively.

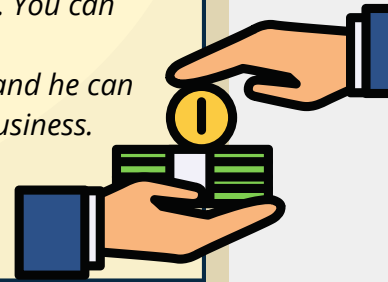
What you are today is a result of what you did with your time yesterday. What you will be tomorrow is a result of what you are doing with your time today. The proper use of time is an investment into the future for you and your children. This is what the Bible means when it says "...time and chance happens to them all" (Ecclesiastes 9:11). We all have an equal portion of time allocated to us. What sets us apart is how we choose to use that time.

GROWING SALES: ESSENTIALS OF MARKETING A BUSINESS



**BY ISRAEL SUNDAWO IN BAHRAIN,
MIDDLE EAST**

Israel Sundawo is a Sales & Marketing Strategist and Consultant who is currently based in Bahrain, Middle East. You can contact him on sundawoizzy1985@gmail.com and he can assist you in growing your business.



In this modern day, the majority of humanity can no longer live by salaries alone, but should run businesses for self-sustenance or to add a second or third income etcetera.

The word of God states that He will bless the works of our hands. It is very important that as Christians we put our hands onto something so that God's blessings can find somewhere to rest.

For businesses to prosper, grow sales and eventually mature to become big businesses, there are basic sales & marketing essentials that any small business owner has to know and implement in this modern age. Marketing involves steps or strategies that lead a business to determine who its customers are or should be, how best to approach them, how to measure responses, how to find more customers, and how to increase the business's bottom line.

Keep in mind, more important than the number of sales is the amount of profitable sales. Below are just a few basic essentials that a business can implement which will help grow sales and profit margins;

Research your market

I have noticed that when we speak about marketing research, it sounds like something only bigger businesses do. The truth is if any large, small or new business neglects this step, it risks selling the wrong product to the wrong people in the wrong place, or at the wrong price.

It is critically important that we do a market research so that we can gather relevant information about what our customers

need and then we make informed business decisions. For example if your customers are your church-mates, you need to speak to them and find out exactly what kind of product or service they require or expect from you and then you supply accordingly. Customers will not buy simply because they know you and you should never try to sell what you want but what the customers want.

Write an Overall marketing plan & establish an annual marketing budget. This doesn't have to be something complicated for a small business but it helps to establish a strategy to grow revenue and clearly outline the path the company needs to take. It will answer issues like target market, geographic segments to be serviced, growth strategy, distribution channels and the communications strategies to be implemented. A clear marketing plan will help us as a business to know where to go, what to do and at what

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time. One will not get stuck along the way.

Marketing is one of the key drivers for any business because it is the only available way that we have to bring our products to the customer in exchange of money. So it is very important for a business to set an appropriate marketing budget. If the business spends too little acquiring customers, it will endanger the flow of new business. If the business spends too much, it will waste money. Creating a successful marketing plan for a business is not a day's job, it can take a lot of time and research. However, if we get it right, it will directly impact our businesses and take them to the next level.

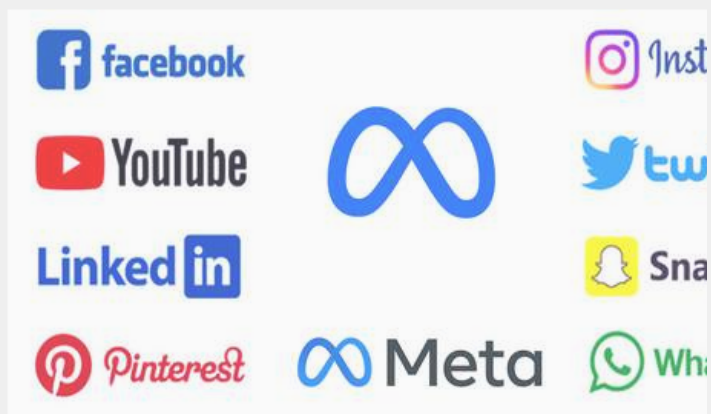
Build a brand

Many consumers or customers will buy a product or service strictly on the strength of the brand, no matter what the cost or how it actually performs. So it is very important that every small business creates or establishes a brand that will quickly come into the minds of the customers. After creating a brand, one needs to protect it at all costs and probably register it officially before someone runs ahead and take it.

Branding is an important component of the product or service, contributing to its quality and perceived value. We should at least make sure all our products' packaging are branded so that the customers know whose it is. A small business owner can actually utilize the already existing or established brand guidelines or strategies which are readily available via online platforms like google or to hire a professional to assist in the journey.

Social Media Marketing

If one wants to successfully market his/her business, he/she simply can't ignore the wonders that come with social media marketing. Social media isn't the be-all and end-all of marketing, but it actually does have a very special place in every modern marketing strategy.



Any serious business owner should make sure that they are available on the major social media platforms (Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, YouTube and Twitter) and should be prepared to post content consistently. That doesn't mean you have to post every day, but it's important to keep up with your fans, followers or customers regularly because this keeps you top of their minds and encourages engagement and traffic.

However as you use social media, it's advisable to engage professionals who can manage your pages and use interactive posts, hashtags and probably enlist the help of influencers to increase sales and eventually profits.

Trust & Integrity

"A false balance is abomination to the Lord: but a just weight is his delight." (Prov 11:1)

Most importantly the word of God teaches us that God never lies. As a business owner, being dishonest would violate God's character in you because He is a God of truth. He not only knows all things, but everything He communicates about what He knows is true. God calls us as His people to exemplify His character through

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GROWING SALES: ESSENTIALS OF MARKETING A BUSINESS



honesty. You should have integrity as you provide goods and services to your customers, be truthful and never cheat your customers.

As a business owner, you can ask yourselves these questions in relation to your sales and marketing activities:

- Is there anything unfair or deceptive about your products or services?
- In what way might you be exaggerating or overstating your offers?
- What would the customer say if they knew what you know?

One key important thing for business owners who are also Christians is trust & integrity. This on its own will lead to growth in sales as satisfied customers are able to actually bring more customers to the business leading to sales growth.

These are just a few ways that you can implement depending on your budget and target audience, you should be able to identify which channels will be most effective in connecting you to your potential customers and also, you should have in mind that it's better to spread your campaign across different platforms to spread your net. God bless you.

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SOCIAL LIFE

OVERCOMING ADDICTION



**BY BOANERGES DAVESFIELD
MUDIMBA IN HARARE, ZIMBABWE**

Pastor Boanerges Davesfield Mudimba is a youth and mental health activist; director of Harven of Hope Trust Zimbabwe

can notice that someone is coming from doing all these things of which someone can stay affected by it for a very long time and can cause more damage to mental, emotional, physiological and social wellbeing of that whole person.

We have so many people who don't consider themselves as addicted in this common equation but we have people who cause more harm to others through their addictions "regardless of the consequences".

We have people who are addicted to gossip, social media, attention seeking, always right attitude, prayer, scripture reading. In most cases we find these kinds of addictions in the church and sometimes with church leaders. Such cannot be corrected because they are at the helm of the organization so people are afraid to correct them.

In most cases congregants

react by leaving the church or backsliding. These addictions are very dangerous for Christians and our society at large. Sometimes you find people saying they cannot go back to church again because the church leaders did something that led them to leave church.

The major question is; how can someone get out of addiction? Well it is a journey to get out of addiction. The journey of getting out of addiction begins with a simple step of admitting powerlessness (2 Cor 4:7-10). Yes admitting that one is powerless over their life circumstances and that they have failed to manage their lives prepares for the journey to recovery. When someone admits that they are powerless over what they do and what life gives, it prepares that person to develop willingness to change. People who fail to recover from addictions it is because they did not admit powerlessness.

Through the practical journey of helping the addicted, we have met people who bring their children who are drug addicts to get help and just because it is the parent who has developed the willingness for the child to change it did not work unless and until it is the child who decides to seek help.

That is why in most cases we help the affected and the infected because it is the

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SOCIAL LIFE

OVERCOMING ADDICTION

responsibility of the affected to help the infected develop the willingness to change through showing them love. I always say accommodation is not shelter; accommodation is a place inside the heart to belong. Every addicted person can find shelter anywhere and never come back home. What they seek is accommodation in the heart of which in most cases if its substance addiction they get it anywhere in the streets and they are so comfortable leaving the spacious home and stay in the streets where they are accommodated.

The second step to recovery is believing that a power greater than yourself could restore you to sanity (Rom 1:18-20). It is impossible to ever think one could attain recovery without the involvement of God the creator because one ought to report to the one who made him. Even in computer technology if a computer fails to run a certain function, there pops a page that asks the operator to give a report so that the developers can improve on the next version of software update. It is the same for people they out to submit to the life giver because at the end of the day what leads to addictions are the things people cannot control and don't have answers to, except God. Third step to recovery is making a decision to turn one's life over to the care of God as one begins to understand him (Psalms 61:1-8). The thought of turning our wills and our lives over can be attractive. When we give into our dependencies and compulsions, aren't we giving control over to another power? Aren't we in some way giving up personal responsibility for our lives? When we are overwhelmed and want to escape, our addictions can make us feel strong, safe, attractive, powerful and happy.

So, in a sense we are very comfortable with the thought of giving up control of our wills and our lives. We can take a step to change our focus and turn our lives over to God instead of reverting to hiding places of the past (addictions).

Fourth step is to make a search and fearless moral inventory of self (Neh 9:1-3). Most of us falter at the prospect of making an honest personal inventory. Rationalization and excuses for avoiding this step abound. The bottom line is that we know there is an anonymous amount of sadness awaiting us, and we fear the pain that facing the sadness will bring. The Jewish exiles who returned to Jerusalem after captivity in Babylon had lost touch with God. During the exile, they hadn't been taught his laws, so naturally they hadn't practiced them either. After rebuilding the city wall and the temple, the priests gathered the people together to read the book of the law. The people were overwhelmed with grief and began weeping, because their lives in no way measured up.

Fifth step is admitting to yourself, life giver and another person the exact nature of wrongs (Acts 26: 12-18). As we work our recovery program, we go through a process of accepting the truth about our lives and the consequences of our choices. We may feel that we have to earn forgiveness instead of just receiving it. We may find it easier to forgive others who have hurt us than to forgive ourselves for the hurts we have caused.

Ready for God to remove all these character defects (Psalms 51:16-19). If we have sincerely practiced the previous steps we have probably found enough pain inside ourselves to break our hearts, facing the fact that brokenness is part of the human condition can be crushing. But if we have arrived at this point, it is probably a sign that we are ready for God to change us.

Remember it is a journey of progress and not perfection. It is one day at a time without any hurry or much push from anyone.

I will share with us the other six steps to complete the 12 steps in the next edition. Watch this space!

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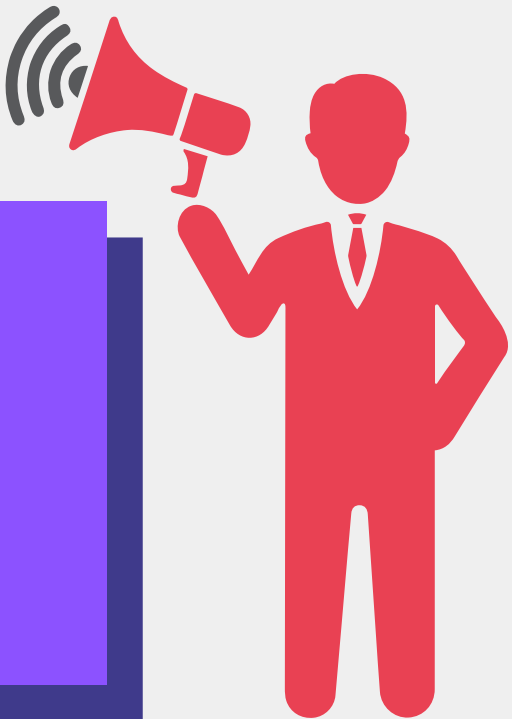
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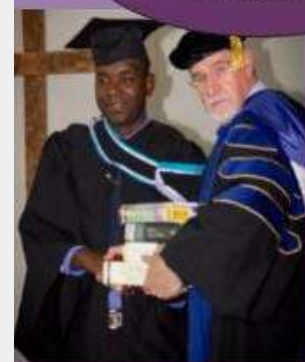
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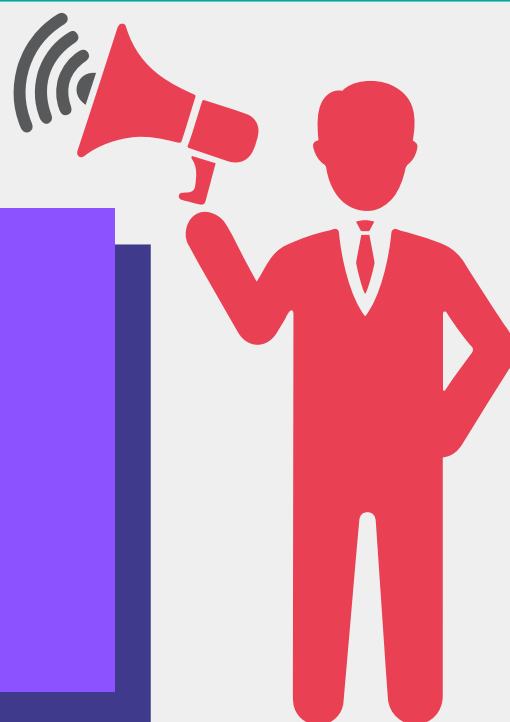
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PROMOTIONAL FEATURE

KULUNDUWE! KULUNDUWE! RISING DIVA SINGS OUT OF COVID-19

A gospel music star rising from Hwange is envisioning evangelizing the gospel through music. Below are excerpts of our interview with her.

1. What's your full name?

I am Judith Mudimba

2. When were you born?

18 September 1989

3. Where were you born?

Hwange

4. What's your marital status?

Married

5. Which church do you attend?

House of Christ Ministries, in Hwange, Zimbabwe.

6. Where did you attend your formal education?

Nejambezi Secondary in Jambezi, Hwange.

7. What inspired you to become a gospel musician?

I want to spread the good news of Jesus Christ in my Tonga language. I seek to spread the goodness of our lord Jesus Christ. I'm just inspired by this conviction, and the zeal that people have when it comes to praise and worship.

8. Why do you sing (What's your mission in music)?

I envision evangelizing the gospel of Jesus Christ through music. God has been faithful to me during the Covid-19 pandemic. There is no day I slept with an empty stomach. I composed a song called Kulunduwe out of this Covid-19 time. In summary, it means that God has been my provider, comforter and faithful.

9. What's your vision (Where do intend to get your music to)?

I want to go international. By 2030 I wish that the whole world gets to know that there are also Tonga worshippers in Hwange. By the grace of the lord, I want everyone to know my songs.



10. Which albums and tracks have you produced so far?

I'm just starting, so far I have four tracks, and am working on the fifth one.

11. Who is your role model?

Locally Mai Charamba, internationally Sinach.

12. What else are you currently pursuing besides music?

I'm an entrepreneur. I buy and sell groceries in Hwange, sourcing my products from Bulawayo.

13. What do you love to do in your spare time?

I'm a generally a worshipper who grew up in a Christian family, so I'm always singing, and writing songs of worship.

14. What's most important that you wish the world to know about you?

I'm humble. I know I'm not supposed to blow my own trumpet, but this time I will, I'm humble and am a hard working person who loves to worship and sing for the lord. I also want to make the next person smile.