

## MINISTER'S PASTORAL LETTER-MONTH OF MAY



I am sure you have already read my December letter in your church magazine. As I dealt with my welcoming experiences here in Northampton. My letter of May focuses on my journey of settling down; this included building new relationships with the Northampton community. As in the Chinese thought, 'a journey of a thousand miles begins with a step.

In my opinion, several steps have already been made during this new frontier of my Christian faith among this wonderful community of Northampton within my seven months. Remember seven is a divine number! In my opinion the first step is a daring one. On the other hand fear becomes a 'buddy' or a 'co-pilot' in every step that I dared. I considered myself not to be alone in this kind of venture. Perhaps then, the disciple of Jesus, unlike myself was on that stormy evening in the Sea of Galilee (**Matthew 14:22-33 NIV**). Peter came down out of the ship after Jesus daring invitation to walk on the water. He walked, became afraid of the storm and began to sink. He called out to Jesus for help.

When in trouble there are numerous kinds of voices we encounter in moments of our life. How we respond is critical. But in whatever circumstance, it's important to respond and make efforts to decision making in our new opportunities to serve and walk with others along with us for the future is still young and hope in God is our greatest motivation for this life. Allow me now to confess how delighted I have been for those who offered to drive me around to locate important places, information, churches, and shopping places while I was yet new in order to help me get settled. These were the Northampton Methodist Circuit support team, Rev'd Helen Cameron the Northampton District Chair, Claire Porter from the Connexional support team, Rev'd Dr. Jonathan Gichaara from Loughborough Circuit, Rev'd. Japhet and wife Rev. Rachael from Yorkshire District, as well as the Kentstone Close neighbourhood. Very soon I had to be out on my own to practically drive around and familiarise myself. However, fear was always around as a 'great buddy'. So, my prayers, were that this doesn't come so soon! But now circumstances demand it. And so one day I went to the town centre on my own and got lost. As I didn't know where I was, I called Jerusha Logongo from Queensgrove Methodist Church, the only person whose mobile phone was in my call list. I told her I was lost and I didn't know where I was. Sure you must want to know what happened thereafter, catch this later in my next letter!

When my car came I drove with my daughter *Mwendwa* to an African shop only to end up in Kettering town 18 miles away from Northampton and not mentioning many times I missed my routes to churches and circuit office, every time I approached a 'mini or big roundabout'. A fear of self-service in supermarkets and gas stations, additional thrills of adventure!

Well in my small naïve mind I couldn't tell the difference between the people that I met on one day and the next one. In my perspective world, all people in the Northampton community looked alike, 'like twins' which of course wasn't so! It was a completely multicultural community, home for the international society. But still I kept thinking that everyone in Northampton knew I was a new comer (just a mind-set assumption really!). And in fact, I refused to deny that fact because it had a great bearing in enabling me to gather courage to request help of whatever kind when I realised I got stuck. A neighbour at Kenstone Close told me they are called 'survival skills' before calling '991'! However, after barely four months, like the disciple of Jesus Peter (*Matthew 14:22*), fear eventually decided to defect without prior notice to another unspecified camp. Shopping centres that I was looked as naïve, the environment was now calm and friendlier, especially at the Northampton Town Square Market, now some can call me by my name and ask how I am doing.

Some of my funniest shopping experiences were on two different occasions, when I went to fuel my car in a petrol station and the other I entered the butchers to order some beef meat. On similar occasions I normally reach out for my wallet, only to my consternation, the wallet wasn't in my pocket as anticipated, but was left lying on the table in the house. Perhaps this are common things happening to everyone I don't know. The attendants, in the two different places coincidentally, looked at how shocked I was ... for I expected arrival of the police at any time. But, I heard reassuring words from them, '*Reverend Francis, you are now known to us, don't worry just bring the money any time you get to your house*'. What do you call that? Stupidity of the highest magnitude, or a serious personal weakness? Has such a thing happened to you? Or have you ever found yourself driving perhaps on a different route from the one you intended? What were your reactions? When we learn to remain calm, the situation sorts itself I guess. But for me I took it easy as a normal *DNA* thing , perhaps in everyone especially when digits are added to our age ! Or perhaps not.

Well, as we journey in our Christian faith, we encounter incredible testimonies of success in life by brothers and sisters in Christ who have gone through 'thick and thin', emerging having refined and stronger in character and value. They are to us, as the 'bible characters', as introduced by the apostle Paul in the epistle to the Hebrews believers in the book of Hebrew chapter 11.



*Small hands make a big difference in all what we do.*

Our Lent bible studies during the holy weeks and to me in particular, the parable of the fig tree in gospel of **Luke 13:6-9** provides us with impetus to keep on igniting our faith even during tough moments. The desperation found by both the owner of the Vineyard and the gardener -and in this case, it's God and his Son Jesus Christ, who reminds us that it is too soon to give up on anything. Name it! Too soon. Jesus in this story says, stand as our advocate, by saying to God, sir, and 'Give it a chance'. Same encouraging words are valid to us all. Be it a church program you are trying to initiate, church or community role you are struggling with, be it God's calling in your life and struggling to deal with. Jesus says, give it a chance. You never know, miracles do happen. It does. The fig tree represents that potential we all have. Remember its green leaves and strong roots.

In the words of the German Nobel Prize award theorist Albert Einstein (1921), observes that, '*we all take knocks in life, but the best things in life come through encouragement and persistence*. Let us be those 'little small hands around each other in all our churches. Sure miracles do happen and you could be holding that key to the miracles in your church. Let it be so.

**Your Church Minister**

**Francis Itiiri**