

## SEPTEMBER 2022

***But first and most importantly seek His kingdom and His righteousness [His way of doing and being right—the attitude and character of God], and all these things will be given to you also. (Amp)***

### Matthew 6:33

Dear Friends,

Thank you from the depth of our hearts for your generous response to my request for funding! I pray that God will multiply these and that we be good stewards of what you have entrusted to us.

Mark Mudri, the chair of our Global Council, and I are excited about being in England in September – first spending a couple of days in London with our dear friend Andrea Williams from Christian Concern at the Wilberforce Academy and then on to Cambridge for the FLAG conference. Prior to the conference, we are planning a gathering of our advocates who are attending (24 of them from 18 different countries). Each of them will be giving us a short report of the well-being of the Christian lawyers in their country and the challenges which they face.

I am also looking forward to seeing some of you in October at the CLS conference in Newport Beach, CA! Please reach out to us if you need any assistance with your visa or registration.

Every time I read the newspapers or watch the news on television, I feel distressed by what I hear and see. Sometimes when I consider the injustice and suffering of people across the globe, I call out *“Come Jesus come!”* I am sure this has frequently been the desperate cry of Christians for the last 2000 years!

The reality is that, until Jesus returns, Christians will not escape this broken and hurting world. Does God want us to simply be helpless victims of the consequences of the sin around us? Does He want us to separate ourselves and not engage with the world we live in?

500 years ago, Martin Luther said that a church that preaches the gospel in all its fulness, **except as it applies to the great social ills of the day**, is failing to preach the gospel at all!

Statistics tell us that there are currently 2.56 billion people in the world who identify as Christians. It means that one in every three persons on this earth is a Christian. It shows that never in human history so many people were evangelized as in the last few generations - indeed a powerful testimony to the missionaries over the past three centuries! How does this Christian influence and legacy reflect on society today?

In her monumental 2006 work *“The Old Testament Template”*, my dear friend Landa Cope writes: *“He (Jesus) never referred to the gospel of salvation. He taught the gospel of the kingdom which includes salvation and the truth about every dimension of life. Yet more than 150 years of mission work has been dominated by this concept of “being saved” as the singular goal”* Landa concludes that the families and communities of the most Christianized cities and countries in the world are no less broken, diseased, corrupted, or devastated than those that have not been exposed to Christianity.

The United States, Brazil, Mexico, and Nigeria boast the highest number of Christians in the world. Does the state of these nations stand as a benchmark that, where the gospel of Jesus Christ is spread, truth and blessing accompanies it?

In my beloved South Africa, where 79% of our population profess to be Christians, one in every three women have suffered domestic violence and nine out of ten primary school children have been exposed to pornography. Corruption is rife, xenophobia escalates, poverty and unemployment are on the increase, government health services and education are in a poor state. How has our nation benefitted by the influence of so many Christians - are we any better off than New Zealand (47,8% Christian) or Singapore (18% Christian)?

The well-known passage in Matthew 28:18-21 reads: *“Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely, I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”* In Christian language, this has become known as **“The Great Commission”**. This is our great directive, instruction, or assignment to: (a) make disciples of all nations (b) baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit and (c) teaching them to obey everything Jesus has commanded us.

This assignment clearly includes preaching the gospel of salvation but most certainly also puts emphasis on **making disciples** (followers, students, adherents, devotees) of Jesus as well as **teaching them to obey everything Jesus has commanded us**.

How do we follow what the Bible teaches us about the various domains of society and the principles that guide our involvement in these arenas – government, economics, science and technology, the church, family, education, communication, arts, and entertainment. Or have we abdicated these domains to the world – either because of ignorance or indifference?

The truths of the gospel of the kingdom are transformative – **our transformed lives** are meant to be salt and light to our families, neighborhoods, communities, and nations making them better places to live.

On March 1, 1975, when I was confronted with the person of Jesus Christ and accepted the salvation He offered me, I was catapulted into the kingdom of God. I ask myself what my kingdom resume looks like since then? In everything, did I first seek the kingdom of God and His righteousness? Has my life been transformed, and have I transformed my world consequently?

Benjamin Zander, the musical director of the Boston Philharmonic Orchestra and its Youth Orchestra, tells how he gives all his students an A on the first day of term. The condition is that by the end of the second week they have written a letter to themselves describing what type of person they are and what they have achieved by the end of the course. This is his way to get his students to frame a personal vision statement and then he watches them live up to it.

I want to give each one of you an A on your kingdom report card and ask you to write your personal kingdom vision statement for the next five years. My prayer is that you will press into God to discover how you can impact every domain of society with your gifts, opportunities, networks, and resources.

Warmly in Christ



Teresa Conradie

President and CEO, Advocates International



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