

WHAT IS GOD SAYING TO US AS CHURCH AND NATION TODAY?

Our Position Before God as His Servants (Rev 1-3)

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INTRODUCTION

The book of Revelation presents the Lord as standing or walking in the midst of the churches. As Lord of the church, He is deeply concerned with the state of His church. The church is His instrument for the spreading of the Good News. The church, through the indwelling Holy Spirit, is Christ's representative on earth. The Lord is in the midst of His church not only to rebuke the church, but also to give new life and direction.

Papua New Guinea is experiencing a great deal of renewal or revival at present. At the same time in many parts of our country the church is very nominal. As a newly-independent nation, we stand at the crossroads of many thoughts, influences, and ways of life. For these and many other reasons the church in Papua New Guinea needs to listen carefully to what the Lord is saying, first to the church as His chosen people, and secondly to the nation. Because the people of God, in a special way, belong to Him, He must deal with them before He can deal with the nation/s.

For it is time for judgment to begin with the family of God; and if it begins with us, what will the outcome be for those who do not obey the gospel of God? (1 Peter 4:17).

I will now direct our thoughts to the first three chapters of Revelation, on which this paper is based. The areas I wish to speak on are:

1. The One who stands in the midst of the churches.
2. Lessons we need to learn from the seven churches.
3. Ways to practise these lessons in Papua New Guinea.

1. THE ONE WHO STANDS IN THE MIDST OF THE CHURCHES

John makes it very clear that the one who stands in the midst of the church is Christ, the risen Lord. The message we have in the book of Revelation comes to us from the One who died and rose again for our salvation. He is called *the faithful witness* (1:5). This means that the message we have before us is a trustworthy testimony of the One who is altogether true. What He says cannot be false, or said to be false. He knows what He is talking about. Our responsibility is to take note of what He says, line ourselves up with what He says, and obey His Words. He is also called *the first-born from the dead* (1:5). He died and rose again from the dead. He had power to lay down His life and to take it up again. He is the only one to whom God has given physical or bodily resurrection. He is therefore the first-born from the dead. To Him, God has given all authority in heaven and on earth. “And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to death – even death on a Cross! Therefore God exalted Him to the highest place and gave Him the Name that is above every Name” (Phil 2:9-10). *He is the ruler of the Kings of the Earth* (1:5).

Here we come to the central focus of our theme. As the ruler of the Kings of the earth, Jesus Christ has a message for the kings and rulers of the earth. He is the ruler, therefore He has the absolute right to speak to the rulers of all the nations. He is interested in what takes place in the national parliament as much as in what takes place in the church synods or conferences. The One who walks or stands in the midst of the churches is also interested in the affairs of all the

nations. Jesus Christ is the source of our political, economic, social and religious life. All history is under His control. He rules from one end of the earth to the other end. “The Son is the radiance of God’s glory . . . sustaining all things by His powerful Word” (Heb 1:3). One day, His rule will become clear when everyone will say He is Lord (Phil 2:10-11). Because He is the ruler of the kings of the earth, the church and the nation must listen to Him and obey Him. There is more in this first chapter of Revelation concerning the power and authority of Jesus Christ – He is the *coming one* (1:17), His authority as our Judge; *dressed up in a robe* (1:13), His authority as the all-sufficient High Priest; *His eyes like blazing fire* (1:14), His authority to judge and to renew; *in His right hand He held seven stars* (1:16), His authority to command and care for His workers; *Out of His mouth came a sharp double-edged sword* (1:16), His authority to speak and the authority of His spoken and written Word.

As the only One who knows and sees all that is going on in His church, He sends out messages to the different congregations. He lays bare the lives of each congregation, calls His people to respond to Him, or be cut off from Him. This is what we will now look at briefly in the next part of this paper.

2. LESSONS WE NEED TO LEARN FROM THE SEVEN CHURCHES

The messages sent to the seven churches contain timeless lessons. Although the seven churches are no longer in existence, the lessons contained in the messages cannot be overlooked. They are meaningful for the churches in Papua New Guinea, in this 20th century. I will now direct our thoughts to seven different lessons found in Rev 2 and 3.

(a) Love Not Doctrine (2:1-7)

This message is directed to the church in Ephesus. The Ephesian church is the most-conservative evangelical church, deeply committed to the fundamental truth of the Christian faith. The Lord sums all these up when He says, “I know your deeds, your *hard*

work, and your Perseverance. . . . You cannot tolerate wicked men . . . have found them false” (2:2). In spite of their conservatism, their well-organised evangelistic and social concern programmes, their zeal for sound doctrines and experiences, the believers in Ephesus failed in what is foremost in the mind of the risen Lord – a love relationship: “You have forsaken your first love” (2:4). We do not know what kind of love is spoken of in this verse. Leon Morris suggests that it is love for God, love for fellow Christian, and love for all humankind. So, while the Ephesian church put all its emphasis on sound teachings, or the right kind of experiences, it lost that central ingredient that holds all things together – love. Without love, nothing else matters.

The church of Ephesus, to which the Lord directed these words, does not exist any more, and yet there are many present-day churches that are like the Ephesian churches. Many churches in Papua New Guinea come under this category. This problem exists amongst our member churches. This is why we don’t appear to trust each other. This is why we pull people of other churches into our churches. We want our particular churches to grow, so we can say our church is the fastest growing church. If our desire to grow means dividing villages into different church groups, I wonder whether our motives are right. When we compete against each other, this clearly shows our lack of love for the Lord, for our fellow Christians, and other people. We confuse the people, we dishonour our Lord, and we divide the people of God.

The way to straighten our wrongs is by doing what the Lord told the Ephesian church to do – remember our mistakes, repent of them and get sorted out. We must not take pride in Biblically-based constitutions, laws and regulations that are not controlled and motivated by Christian love. The Lord summed up this truth when He said:

Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. Love your neighbour as yourself (Matt 22:37, 39).

Doctrines don't save people, love does. It was love that sent Jesus to the Cross, not doctrine. Right doctrines are important to have, but they must not be substituted for love of God or our fellow human being.

(b) Suffering Not Surrender (2:8-11)

The message to Smyrna is a message of encouragement. The Lord calls them to remain faithful in the face of opposition. The opposition came from Jewish leaders, who influenced government authorities to go against the believers. Whatever happens to them, the Lord assures His people that He knows their circumstances. He knows the seriousness of the trouble they are under. He also knows how poor they are. The Lord encourages them by telling them how rich they are because of Him.

Persecution and opposition are bound to come. The church of Jesus Christ, like her Master, must be prepared to face them. Christians should be prepared to face the fact that what they have may have to be taken away from them. When this happens, they should know that they have great riches in Jesus Christ. The Lord will give them the crown of life as their reward, should they remain faithful to Him.

The message of this passage for the church in Papua New Guinea is quite clear. First of all, we need to be clear that the way to the crown is over-shadowed by the Cross. Suffering is part of God's design to bring us into deeper experience of His riches. Secondly, Christianity promises no free cargo, no air-conditioned vehicles, no supernatural supply of food but a person who will stick with us to the end. We should be prepared to suffer for our faith instead of surrendering it at the first opportunity.

(c) The Lord Not Satan (2:12-17)

The church of Pergamum is a compromising church. The people have a real difficulty in choosing between faith in Jesus Christ and their formal religion or way of live. Many people in this church really believe in Jesus Christ. They really seek to follow

Jesus Christ as their Lord and Saviour. But there are many others who have great difficulty in believing in Jesus only. They attend church service, but have no real loyalty to Jesus Christ. They continue to hold on to spirit worship, sexual immorality, and false teachings. The reason for their compromise or nominal way of life is because of the location where they live. The Lord says “I know where you live – where Satan has his throne” (2:13).

Pergamum is an important religious centre. People come from all over the world to be healed by the god Asclepius. The city has temples to such gods as Zeus, Dionysos, and Athene. It is the centre of Caesar-worship also. It has three temples dedicated to Rome and Augustus. The city also has a great number of heathen temples. This is the centre of important sorcerers, magicians, and wonder workers. Here, there are many heathen priests, cult observers, and possibly religious prostitutes. No wonder the place is called the throne of Satan. It is important to note that here in Pergamum we have God’s faithful witnesses, people like Antipas, men and women who keep their faith, and remain true to the name of Jesus.

Pergamum is like many villages in Papua New Guinea, where Satan still has strong hold on our people. The people will not give up their heathen practices and evil way of life, because Satan has made them his prisoners. The heathen are making it very difficult for the few faithful Christians to remain true to their faith and trust in Jesus Christ. The heathen make it difficult for these Christians to believe in the truth of God’s Word.

God’s message for this kind of people comes in two parts. First, there is the call to repentance. God wants all heathen worshippers to repent before He brings judgment on them. Secondly, there is a message of encouragement for the faithful ones. God will give them the hidden manna to eat and receive a new name. God is fully responsible for their future, so they should not worry or give up their faith.

(d) Purity of Life Not Freedom (2:18-29)

I would like to call the church of Thyatira a “second-mile” church. Another way of calling this church would be “freedom church” or “liberated church”. This church is doing more now than it did at first; more faithful, more missionary minded, more enduring in its service for the Lord.

The problem this church has is centred in a woman called Jezebel. She calls herself a prophetess, and therefore sees herself to be a religious woman. She probably set herself up as an authority on religious matters. She freely tells the Christians that sexual activities and eating food offered to idols are quite alright. She probably emphasises the freedom that Christians have in Christ without too much concern for purity of life. She and her followers conform themselves to the practices of their heathen neighbours. Satan is using her to teach his deep secrets to others (2:24).

The Lord warns her and sets time for her to repent. The Lord is concerned for His church. If she refuses to repent, she and her children will be put to death.

Here we have a clear lesson on Christian discipline. Whatever our churches are, we must not be frightened to discipline immoral and false teachers. We must not use our freedom in Christ to do what we like or let others go astray. We are free to care for and protect each other.

(e) Commitment Not Reputation (3:1-6)

Sardis is an active commercial city and very wealthy. It is built on a very steep hill, difficult for the enemy to attack. Because of their wealthy and secure position, the people are overconfident, careless, and lazy. This is true of the Christians, too. They have given their lives to Jesus Christ, but there is no commitment on their part to grow in their spiritual lives. They have the reputation of being alive, but are dead. Here we have a very nominal church, more nominal than Pergamum and Thyatira. The churches of Pergamum and Thyatira have mixed memberships, but the church of Sardis has

more nominals than the other two. This is the reason why the Lord refers to it as a dead church.

Recent studies done on Papua New Guinea, show that as high as 96 percent of the population claim to be Christian. The same study shows that in a ten-year period (1970-1980), the yearly conversion rate that stood at 2.74 percent is almost equal to the number that turned into nominalism. Papua New Guinea is therefore a very nominal Christian country. The nation has a reputation for being alive, while in reality we are dead. This means we have an urgent task to fulfil. That task is to call our nation to obey what it has heard, to repent, and to turn to the Lord. Our mission to the nation will best be accomplished when, first of all, we who profess to be Christians, obey what we hear, repent, and turn to the Lord first.

(f) Action Not Resting (3:7-13)

The passage before us introduces us to the kind of church or fellowship that brings joy to the heart of God. The church of Philadelphia, together with that of Smyrna, are praised for their faithfulness, and encouraged by the Lord to keep on being faithful. These two churches are free from internal heresies. Their enemies are from outside not inside.

The name Philadelphia means brotherly love. What a lovely name this is for a Christian church or fellowship. From what we read in this passage, it appears as if the Christians in this city practise what the name of their city stands for. Philadelphia is situated in such a position that it is known as the “gateway to the East”. Christians in this city make it their business to befriend strangers and share the gospel out of brotherly love and concern. This church, though small, is a church with real quality. This church has accepted its missionary responsibility for the Hellenistic people.

The church in Philadelphia has been so faithful to its missionary task that the Lord now sets an open door before its congregation for more missionary work. “See, I have placed before you an open door that no one can shut. I know that you have little

strength, yet you have kept My word and have not denied My Name” (3:8).

Although the church in Philadelphia is small and weak, the Lord sets before it an open door for effective missionary service and witness. The Lord gives us more to do when we have proved faithful to Him in what He gives us to do.

I believe the time is now for the church in Papua New Guinea to reach out with missionary activities. The Lord is calling us to get deeply involved in the life of our nation, and the nations around us. We may be weak and small, but our God is great and mighty. With Him, and through Him, we are more than enough for the task he sets before us. God is ready to do the work; are we?

(g) Neither Cold Nor Hot (3:14-22)

The Laodicean church spoken of in this passage has become useless for the Lord. It is neither cold nor hot; therefore the Lord cannot use it. However, let us see how gracious the Lord is toward this church. He draws near to it and says:

I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined in the fire, so you can become rich; and white clothes to wear, so you can cover your shameful nakedness; and salve to put on your eyes, so you can see.

Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him and he with Me (Rev 3:18, 20).

Instead of spitting this church out of His mouth, the Lord draws near to make a new start. The Lord sets out to help the church by seeking its cooperation. He knocks on the door, waiting if the door will be opened. The Lord is knocking on the door of many churches and congregations, patiently waiting for the doors to be opened to Him.

In this second part of the paper, we have very briefly walked in the midst of the seven churches in 1st-century Christianity. In the last part of the paper, I want to suggest some ways to practise the lessons outlined in this part of the paper.

3. WAYS TO PRACTISE THESE LESSONS IN PAPUA NEW GUINEA

So far, we have seen that the One who stands in the midst of the church is Christ, the risen Lord, the ruler of all the kings of the earth. We have also seen that different churches emphasise different things and follow different ways of life. Many of these churches do not clearly follow the will and the thinking of the Lord. Some of these churches are at the point of death. The Lord is concerned for His church, so He stands ready to offer His grace and strength to all. The churches or congregations described in the first three chapters of Revelation are very much like many of the churches in Papua New Guinea. In this part of the paper, we will look at some of the ways for us to practise the truths or lessons found in these three chapters in Papua New Guinea today. I will now outline several lessons for us to think about.

(a) The Lord is in the Middle of His Church

When John, the writer of Revelation, turned in the direction of the voice he heard, he saw the Lord of the church standing among the churches, holding the seven stars in His right hand.

John tells us that he was under the control of the Holy Spirit when he heard the voice (1:10). Was John concerned about these churches in Asia Minor? Was he thinking how these churches will get on without someone like John?

If this is what John was concerned about, then he can rejoice, because what he cannot do, the Lord is there to do. The Lord made Himself visible to John to assure him that the welfare of the church is His personal responsibility. The Lord has been with His church right from the start. As High Priest, the Lord is fully dressed up to serve

His church. If John does not know this, he had better get this truth deep into his heart.

When John turned around, He saw the Lord standing among the seven golden lamp stands, which represent the seven churches. The Lord is seen standing among all the seven churches, not just one or two churches. The Lord has all the churches in His hands. He has them all under His control.

Because this is true, we need to be very careful how we treat each other. It is not right for us to pull down or condemn other churches. It is not right for us to pull people away from the church they belong to and give them our church names. We must stop playing the wrong kind of number games, because it does not honour the Lord Jesus.

The Lord is in the midst of His church. He is far more concerned with the growth of His people than you and I are. He is at work in every congregation, whether it is Anglican, Baptist, Roman Catholic, or Lutheran. We need to believe this and practise it in our relationships with each other. The Lord has all the ministers and congregations in His hands. Let us be more patient and loving with each other as He is with us.

(b) The Lord Has a Message For Each Congregation

What John wrote to each of the seven churches is a particular message the Lord had for a particular congregation. John wrote down the messages that he heard from the Lord. When John turned around, instead of hearing the voice, he saw the voice. "I turned round to see the voice that was speaking to me" (1:12). It is important for us not just to hear the voice, but to see the speaker as well. The authority of the message is hidden in the greatness of the person who speaks. The greater the person, the greater the message, the more powerful and authoritative are his words. This is true of John when he turned around and saw the voice: "When I saw him, I fell at His feet as though dead" (1:17).

The person who speaks to John the first time is our risen and glorified Lord. However, as John closes each message, he says: "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches" (2:7, 11, 17, 29; 3:6, 13, 22). Now, there is no difference between the Lord Jesus and the Holy Spirit. Let us get this truth deep into our hearts. Let us not make the Lord Jesus and the Holy Spirit to look to be different from each other when they are not. Our teaching must line up clearly with the truth of the scriptures.

The Lord Jesus is working in the church and the world today through the Holy Spirit. What the Holy Spirit says is what the Lord Jesus wants us to hear. The Holy Spirit takes what belongs to the Lord Jesus and makes it known to us. The Holy Spirit and the Lord Jesus don't disagree with each other.

The messages that are recorded in the first three chapters of Revelation are Christ's messages to us through the Holy Spirit. This is what the Holy Spirit is saying to all churches: "He who has an ear let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches". The messages that are directed to each individual church are for all the churches. Let us examine our lives, and the lives of our congregations, in the light of the truth found in these passages as well as the rest of the Bible.

John says: ". . . and out of His mouth came a sharp double-edged sword" (1:16). This statement brings us face to face with the power and authority of God's word. The Lord who spoke to John is still speaking today. He does this primarily through His written word.

The word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart. Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of Him to whom we must give an account (Heb 4:12-13).

(c) We Need to Know What God's Word Says

The greatest need of our churches today is for careful teaching of God's Word. At this Conference, we have spoken about evangelism. I am keen for it. True evangelism must be deeply rooted in the truth of God's Word. When the Word of God and its truth penetrates into the soul and spirit of a person, it will do its own work. When that Word is watered by the Spirit of God, it will bring forth an abundance of fruit.

We need full-time evangelists, we also need full-time Bible teachers. We need to ask God to give us these kinds of people – men and women! Let our Bible teachers move around with our evangelists. Let the Bible teachers teach those who respond to Christ in evangelistic meetings. We must not only talk about EA evangelist, we must talk about EA Bible teacher as well. We need both, we must pray for both. For the word of God to come alive to our people, we need Spirit-anointed Bible teachers.

(d) We Need to be Honest With Each Other

The words from Hebrews, that I have quoted above, call us to do this: "Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of Him to whom we must give an account" (Heb 4:13).

We need to be honest with each other when we move among each other's churches. Let us help the people to grow into Christ inside the churches they belong to. God wants them to stay there and grow there. The Lord Jesus did not say to John, "Now, tell all the members of the church in Sardis, the 'dead' church, to join the congregation of Philadelphia". Not at all. The Lord sent some more teaching to them to get them back on the right track, and to keep moving.

We need to be honest with the truths that we teach. One of the questions raised in this Annual General Meeting is about baptism. Inside our EA member churches, we have different ideas about the way, and the reasons, for baptism. However, we baptise a person,

and for whatever reason, one thing is practised by all of us. When we baptise a person we baptise that person into the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Supposing the same person comes to be baptised again, whose name should be baptise him or her into? Who says that the Name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit he or she was baptised into before does not count? Can we say that the God into whose name that person was baptised earlier has not been at work in his life bringing him to the experience of conversion? I want to say that the baptism given in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit cannot be repeated. When we repeat, we make mockery of the name of God. Whether a person is saved at the time of his baptism, to me is a different question altogether. I believe I am saved, not because I was baptised, but because I have faith in Jesus Christ as my Saviour and Lord.

We need to be honest with each other in relation to the experiences that God gives us. To say that everyone must experience my experience is to say that God works only in this way and no other way. God is bigger than all our experiences put together.

(e) We Need to Present the Gospel Meaningfully

There are two areas to consider under this section. These two areas are related to method and meaning. There is a large percentage of nominalism in Papua New Guinea today because the method we use to bring people to Jesus Christ is foreign to them. In Papua New Guinea, important matters are almost always community affairs. Marriage is very important in Papua New Guinea. It is a community affair. Everyone participates in it, older people, young people, men and women, pigs, dogs, birds, food, money, and the spirits. Becoming a Christian is like getting married. How many people participate in this act of marriage called conversion or becoming Christian? When two people are to be married, everybody in the community talks about it. When a person wants to become a Christian, how many people talk about it?

The other point to consider here is that of meaning. What does it mean to be a Christian in Papua New Guinea? Does it mean one

wife, going to church twice every Sunday, singing Western songs, dressing up like the missionaries, and talking and behaving like them? True conversion in any culture is conversion at world-view level. To be converted, or to become Christian, involves change of loyalty. It involved turning away from whatever was important to me, and letting Jesus Christ take that place in my life. The “whatever” may represent “spirit beings”, “material wealth”, or “accumulation of knowledge”.

To present the gospel meaningfully, the communicators need to be culturally relevant and meaningful. The Lord spoke in relevant terms to the seven churches. We need to do the same for our churches today.

(f) We Need to Make Good Use of Our Open Doors

To the church in Philadelphia, our risen Lord said:

“See I have placed before you an open door that no-one can shut. I know that you have little strength, yet you have kept My word and have not denied My name. I will make those who are of the synagogue of Satan, who claim to be Jews, though they are not, but are liars – I will make them come and fall down at your feet and acknowledge that I have loved you.”
(Rev 3:8-9)

Here we have words of challenge, encouragement, and promise. Our Lord challenges and encourages us to take hold of the open doors and possess this nation for the Lord. The door to preach and witness for Jesus Christ in Papua New Guinea today is wide open. No restrictions are put on any of us to propagate our faith. Our national constitution encourages us to freely believe and teach our faith. While this is so, we need to watch against the misuse of the freedom the constitution allows us. We need to watch that what we preach is Christ and not denominationalism. Our calling is to disciple people for Christ, not to make followers of our denominations. The gospel has penetrated into all corners of Papua New Guinea. In every village, the church buildings stand prominent.

There is a nucleus of believing people. Instead of converting them to our particular brand of Christianity, let us help them to grow in the church they belong to, and become effective witnesses for the Lord there. When we try to separate burning sticks, the fire will die. When we keep the sticks burning together, the fire will get stronger, will generate more heat, and do its work effectively. Let us, once and for all, in the name of Jesus and for His sake, stop confusing and dividing the body of Christ. The warning is already on the wall. If we fail to take note of it, we will regret it deeply.

In future, it may be necessary for aggrieved Christian individuals or churches to have legal recourse to the courts, in order to protect religious freedom when it is threatened or violated by behaviour wrongfully done, and causing a wrong in the name of religious liberty (Church-Government Policy and Programme Integration Planning Workshop, Goroka, February 20-29, 1984).

The other open door we have in this country is to witness to people from other faiths and nationalities. People from countries that are closed or semi-closed to foreign missionaries are entering Papua New Guinea in great numbers. It is as if the Holy Spirit is bringing them into this so-called "Christian" nation so that we can witness to them. How can we reach them for Christ? Should we ask the government to close doors on them? Is that really religious freedom?

The doors are open to us to reach out into cells of our corrective institutions, the lonely city dwellers, the troubled youth, and broken homes with the gospel of Jesus Christ. Are we training people to reach into these areas?

Finally, the door to go beyond the shores of Papua New Guinea is also open to us. The students at the Christian Leaders' Training College are excited about it. Within the next two or three years, we will have the first missionaries from EA member churches go out to other countries. Are we ready to step out into the deep?

(g) We Need to Recognise that the Lord's Hand is on our Nation and His Church

The One whom John saw standing among the lamp stands is in charge of our nation, and the nations of the world. This is His world. He is in control. The trouble is we are not willing to turn to Him, to see Him in all His glory, and be drawn to Him.

The church of Jesus Christ is commissioned by Him to call our nation to face God's standards of righteousness, justice, and integrity. Christ the risen Lord is ruler of all the kings of the earth.

Further to this, we need to recognise that the Lord's hands are also on us His servants. Just as He held the seven stars in His hands, so He is holding you and me. Let us open the doors of our hearts to Him. Let us hear Him speak to us. Let us see Him as He is in all His glory and majesty.

(h) We Must Begin Where John Began

John says, "When I saw Him, I fell at His feet as though dead" (1:17). This is where all of us must begin. We need to fall on our faces at the feet of the Master. We must die to ourselves. We must die to our denominational goals and ambitions. We must die to our limited views and concepts.

The message that the Lord sent to the churches was a message to repent, to return, and to be renewed. The risen Lord is in our midst today. In His Name, I call us to repent of everything that is not worthy of Him, to return to Him, and to be renewed by Him. Having done that, we need to return to each other, unite our forces, and go out to serve Him in His strength.

It is important also for us, as members of EA, to renew our commitment to the principles and practices that brought this organisation to birth 20 years ago.

Thus, in this paper, we have seen that the Lord of the church is in the midst of His church, calling to the church to renew her love for

Him, to suffer for Him, to make Him the Lord of her life, and to get into action for Him. We have also seen how we should practise the lessons we have learned in Papua New Guinea today. As He called those churches of long ago, so He calls us to acknowledge that:

- He is in the midst of His church,
- He has a message for each congregation,
- His Word is important for His church,
- we need to be honest with each other,
- the gospel has a very important message that needs to be presented meaningfully,
- He is the One who opens doors for us,
- His hands are on our nation and church,
- the way to renewal is through dying to self.

Let me conclude this paper by letting the Lord ask us the question He asked long ago of Ezekiel:

“Son of man, can these bones live?”
I said, “O Sovereign, Lord, you alone know”.