

Conversations with Central Conference Ministry Leaders: Gift Machinga

Mighty Rasing: Reverend Gift Kudakwashe Machinga, welcome to the podcast! Gift, how are you today?

Gift Machinga: I'm fine Mighty, thank you!

MR: So, Gift, one to the things I'm interested in especially – my name is Mighty, and that has generated quite a number of questions from people I meet like 'is that really your real name?' So, I'm also going to do the same for you. I'm interested, how did you get the name Gift?

GM: It is related, also, to my faith journey. You cannot divorce my faith journey with my birth story. So, it was told, narrated, to me by my parents. It so happened that a young man, John, met Loveness and they got married. Just like any other Africa couple recently married they were expecting to have a child, and that never was in their experience.

So, in the culture– in the Shona culture, our Shona culture, you expected child nine months after wedding night, but two years came by, nothing happened. Three years, nothing. For years they didn't have a child and like any other African couple they received some advices from people to seek for assistance from all over, and they sought assistance from African traditional healers and have been to different parts of the country looking for help. They were given all sorts of African medicines; they were made to– to perform all sorts of rituals and some deity, but all to no avail.

Six years, nothing happened. Seven years, nothing happened. So much that Loveness was given all sorts of derogatory names and John's parents and relatives, mostly relatives, they asked him to chase Loveness away because, according to them, Loveness was useless in their clan. But John said: "I love Loveness, not the child."

And anyway, they went on to offer John some would-be wives should he take their advice to chase Loveness away, but John said no. To a point, whereby, John's relatives had to literally, and physically, chase Loveness away from the clan. And fortunately for Loveness, John said: "Because they have chased my wife, I will also follow her." And, indeed they went away.

Loveness, fortunately for her, she met three Methodist women who said to her: "Loveness, we know of your predicament. We know you have been to different parts of the country looking for a child and you have been everywhere. We have a question for you; have you ever tried Christ?" And Loveness, true to herself, said no and, after some discussion, Loveness made a decision for Christ, and these women who helped Loveness and mentored her into prayer and fasting programs. And a few months down the line, it was a big surprise for Loveness that she had conceived.

MR: Wow.

GM: But three months down the line, the pregnancy developed some complications and the joy was short-lived. But she was then referred then to a mission hospital –Methodist mission hospital, in the country which was several hundreds of kilometers away. There they met a – a missionary doctor from the United States by the name of Dr. Pyben, who, helped Loveness both medically and spiritually; and according to her, the physician, he never allowed Loveness to go back. He detained Loveness in the Nyadire Mission Hospital from there on. And Loveness was put on the prayer – prayer list for the Nyadire community. According to Dr. Pyben and his examination, probably at best the child was going to die, and the mother survive, or the mother dying, or most likely both the lives of the mother– the mother and the child were at risk.

But, it was almost 56 years ago on that particular day, the 16th day of April, that Dr. Pyben received this miracle it was a big surprise that at delivery both the child and mother were healthy, and according to the Shona culture in the Zimbabwe context it is the parents or the grandparents who give the name, especially to the first-born child, but because of the miracle that the missionary doctor had witnessed he had to ask for a special privilege to name the child and that privilege was granted. And Dr. Pyben would not come up with any better name other than Gift and Kudakwashe, Kudakwashe meaning ‘God’s will.’

MR: Wow! So, that’s –that’s a good story Gift, and like you said this lines up really closely with your faith story, which started with your parents and the role of the Christian faith in– in the family and also in bringing you to this world. So, God’s will, which is Kudakwashe in your language and Gift so. Wow. What a story, thank you for sharing that.

So, since you were born and then– Did you grow up in the United Methodist– well, did you grow up in the Methodist Church? Or how would you describe your growing up and your faith journey, which eventually led you to becoming a pastor in the United Methodist Church?

GM: Indeed. Naturally, I– I grew up in the United Methodist Church because my mom was now professing her Christian faith in the church and it all started– Initially, I didn’t like to go to church because I was a very skilled soccer player. So, instead of going to church, I would rally my peers into street soccer play. But later on, with encouragement, from my mother especially, I started going to church and to attend Sunday School. We were in a high-density suburb of Glen Norah, which was part of Highfield, a charge of the United Methodist Church. So, we would go as children first to attend Sunday School and come to back to look after the homes when parents would now go to attend worship in High Field. So, it was at–at that level when I was attending church school that I met and was led to make a personal decision for Christ. I give credit to the educational program then that really nurtured me spiritually into a growing Christian. And later on, I was promoted to be a Junior Church School teacher. And then in–in the process I was asked to be superintendent for the Junior Church School for our local church.

MR: And how old were you when, when you became a superintendent of the church school?

GM: I think I was about 15 years, 16 then.

MR: Wow, that's pretty young. Still a youth and being asked to handle these kinds of responsibilities.

GM: Oh yeah, it was really amazing for me too. And it was also at that time that I was elected to lead the United Methodist Youth Fellowship as its President, and we got encouragement from our youth advisors; they played a very significant role in my spiritual growth journey, as well as my pastor then. And, I can say I was one of the youngest youth member to be drafted in a church— a United Methodist Youth Fellowship executive leadership team.

And then I was asked to lead, or to chair, the community service department of the United Methodist Youth Fellowship. And from then on, I was asked to – to be a delegate for our charge to the annual conference of the United Methodist Church in our—in our annual conference then. And then, our pastor then seen the gift in me encouraged me to enroll in a local preacher's course, which I did.

And then, Zimbabwe was involved in a War of Liberation, and soon after the War of Liberation, when we got our independence, it was then the churches in the urban sent in people out in the rural areas where our churches had been closed down. So, we had some bands going out in the rural churches opening churches through revivals. And I was the youngest to be drafted in those teams representing our team from our church going into the rural areas almost every other week.

MR: Wow.

Preaching and opening churches and that was – that was, that was the journey, my spiritual journey, and my journey in the ministry then. And, I had wanted to be a teacher and also the other thing that I really liked most was to be a professional soccer player because really, I was really gifted and skilled in that aspect.

MR: Right.

GM: But I— I ended up responding to the call to the ministry. It was when I was 17 years when I received my calling into the ministry and I was processed when I was 18 and— but then because they didn't normally then but I later learned that after processing the church told me they would not send me to seminary because, we are sponsored by the church to go to seminary. Because we had met our— there really were enough students for the church then in seminary for the first year. But then I later learned that they wanted to nurture me more because they were not so sure, because of my age if I was really serious in this calling ministry but then that was— but instead of going to seminary I was asked to be a lay— a lay pastor. And I was offered a position as an assistant local lay pastor.

MR: You know what I like about you telling this story Gift? It's how your personal story intersects with the history of the United Methodist Church in Zimbabwe and all the things that are happening in society. You mentioned the War of Liberation and then you mentioned a lot of

Christians, particularly Methodists, moving out from the urban areas to the rural places to reopen churches engaging in, essentially, almost like a missionary movement within your country planting or reopening churches that previously closed. So, that must have been quite a journey.

GM: Quite a journey indeed. I gained a lot and grew spiritually and grew also in ministry even though I— I was still young, a youth.

MR: Right, Right. So, can you share when you were officially ordained as an elder in the United Methodist Church?

GM: I received the first ordination as the deacon in 1984, and then 2 years later, I was ordained an elder. That was 1986.

MR: Wow. So, you've been in the ministry for quite a while now. So, I know this is going to be a transitional question as well, but I'm also interested; do you remember any of the books or any maybe one or two books that you remember having a profound impact on your faith and the way that you do and practice your ministry in Zimbabwe?

GM: You are referring when I was growing up as a Christian? Or in my Ministry?

MR: It could be when you were growing up, or as a Christian, or when you were in a ministry, or maybe you can tell us both if you have some favorite books that have influenced you in a deep way.

GM: When I was growing as an a minister as a— as a young Christian, there were some Christian education books written then by one of the profound Christian education directors, who is late now, the Rev. Lameck Zhungu. So, he used to produce some lessons on Sunday School so, we would go through those— those books so. Those books really had a big impact on me.

MR: Can you repeat his name please, and is he an African pastor and author?

GM: Yes, Rev. Lameck Zhungu.

MR: So, I believe that's an important detail that one of books or resources that have influence with you when you were still young was Bible lessons written by an African. And our — this, this podcast episode the main bulk of what I will be asking you about is centered around production and use of resources whether they are printed resources, books, booklets and how those are being used by the church in Zimbabwe.

And I know you're wearing many different hats: you are a pastor, you are a father of course, you— you've been a district superintendent, and you also worked with Discipleship Ministries particularly in the Discipleship Resources International project. But I'm interested now about

drawing upon your experience as a young person going through those resources written by Dr. Shungu.

GM: Rev. Shungu.

MR: Rev. Shungu. Now, in this present day, what are some of the resources that are being used by the church in Zimbabwe?

GM: The church in – after, after let me say, before directly answering your question, there was a gap after Rev. Lameck Zhungu's time. There really was a gap in terms of publishing material production. It was expressed in our every annual conference the need for learning and teaching materials.

Every annual conference there was a call for that, if I may quote some of the reports that were presented to the annual conference, the district superintendent composite report in 2007. I would quote the annual conference: "The church still awaits their written Christian education materials to be used in our local congregations." So, there was that yearning for written materials as resources for use in the local churches. And they reiterated that call the following year at the annual Conference. They said: "connectional ministries worked very hard in the last quadrennium as realized by growth in various ministry areas. However, there's urgent need for written literature on Christian education." So, in Zimbabwe there was a yearning for written materials.

There was a calling for people to come up with materials that could help pastors, that would help church leaders, that would help Sunday school teachers, that would be help local preachers to act as a resource material. So, it is that gap that really– I also had a passion to fill in the gap at least to contribute something along those lines towards meeting the need in the annual conference.

MR: Yeah. Thank you for sharing that. And one of the things, too, that in Discipleship Ministries and, especially through the Discipleship Resources International project, was what– what we want to do to enable the production of contextual resources in the central conferences, and all over the world really, because when local people resource their own churches then it is more true. They can speak about shared cultures shared metaphors and shared understanding of what it means to be a Christian in their– in their own setting. So, after that call for written resources to be used in the– in the local churches, how is the church addressing that need? Or are there some efforts to – this was 2007 and 2008, right? Since then, what were the efforts undertaken by the church to address the need for written resources in local churches and for the whole church?

GM: It was intentional, for the church, and I'm glad I was part of the puzzle. I had just been elected as the chairperson for the Board of Discipleship for the Zimbabwe East Annual Conference, and in 2009 we had Steve [Bryant] and Kara [Oliver]. They had been requested by the bishop to come for the leadership to – to facilitate a leadership retreat for our conference

leadership, and I happened to be there, as well as my counterpart in the Zimbabwe West annual conference, and it was at that seminar that we started to interact with Steve and Kara in terms of having materials available.

Having had my student visa status in the United States, I was aware of resources that the general church had. So, we— we engaged Steve, but we said to him: “We have the human resource to be able to write some materials in our African context; context that would help the African church more effectively.” So, if we could partner the General Board of Discipleship and the African church in terms of producing materials and we got immense support from the Bishop’s office to support that request and Steve was very forthcoming, and that was the beginning of a partnership, a relationship, between the General church as represented as the General Board of Discipleship and the Zimbabwe Episcopal Area as represented by the Bishop’s office— Bishop Nhiwatiwa.

MR: Sorry to interrupt Gift, I was just going to say for people who are watching the show: Gift is talking about Rev. Stephen Bryant who is currently the publisher of the Upper Room, and Kara Oliver who is also a director of the Upper Room Center here at Discipleship Ministries. And they, the two of them, were very instrumental in starting and resourcing the publishing teams that were started as a part of the Discipleship Resources International. And, what year did the publishing team in Zimbabwe start, Gift?

GM: 2009.

MR: Alright, thank you. And so, can you talk about the types of materials and resources that the church needs, and the publishing team has produced since 2009. That’s been 10 years ago as of this recording.

GM: The types of resources that the Zimbabwean church needed was those resources that would capacitate the pledge in their work. The resources that would help and assist the lay leadership in the church to train others. We needed resources that would help in our Christian education ministry. Not only Christian education ministry, in our worship, needed worship resources. The Zimbabwean church needed resources even for the institutions, educational institutions, we have quite a number of schools, and we have students in those schools. And, we needed to have the positive impact in the lives of those students, and the human personnel in those institutions, they need resources to help them assist these young people in their growth— in their spiritual growth. So those are some of the materials needed in our situation in our country.

MR: And since identifying those needs, how did the publishing team address those needs? And, can you talk about some of the books or booklets that have been published and produced in response to these needs?

GM: Yes, we have had a number— several of booklet publications, as well as book publication. We have publications like booklets, like this one, lessons on stewardship. It's one of those that was published. Another booklet that was published was on prayer and fasting.

We have this booklet on Christian faith sharing, which we translated in all our languages. It is in English, in Ndebele and in Shona. We have a booklet, that I also wrote on the Christian seasons and also a number of booklets that we have come up with.

In terms of books, our first project was a guide to candidates for baptism and confirmation. This was our first product as a publishing team, it was a book that was co-authored. We had to identify first that what the team did, which was to identify those pastors and laypeople who had a passion to write, and then we identified them in our districts through the 11 districts in the episcopal area then. And, we said responding to the need, we need a resource book to be used by teachers and by pastors and teachers in preparing church members for membership, for baptism, and confirmation.

The situation in Zimbabwe, and probably in Africa, is that we have more, more members in our churches than we have in our book. More people would come to church, they would fill the church every Sunday. So, we said to ourselves: "We have so many people evangelization taking place so many people coming to the church. So, when they come to the church, so what? they need to look to grow, to grow in their faith journey. They need to grow in their spirit.

So, when you have so many people they now need to be groomed and to deepen their roots in their faith. So, we came up with this resource material to help as meeting the need in the Zimbabwean church. We had people who were just getting baptized without knowing why, why it is baptism. There were professing members in the church, being confirmed in the church, being full members in the church without really knowing. But with the production of a learning and teaching materials that really was very helpful, that was very helpful. And we brought together different authors then we gave each other some sections to write. And the result was a book, it was our first book.

MR: Right, and I would just like to highlight some of – some of what you said about the experience of the church in Zimbabwe and probably in Africa. You said that you have more members than those in your books which means like the official membership roll, right? And so, I have two questions in relation to that, and number one is: How is the church going through with the evangelism process? How does the church, whether that's a local church or the annual conference, how does the church invite and preach to the people so that it results to people filling up the churches?

And secondly, you mentioned the need for more education about what people are signing up for because when they go through baptism, we need to have an understanding of what baptism is right? And one of that is the answer. The book that you held. So, in— in relation to that my question is: Do people in Zimbabwe, especially Christians both old and new Christians, do they

read books on their Christian faith or in general a lot of people rely on their pastors for teaching and for the church for feeding their spiritual growth?

GM: Both, I would say both. They would rely on their pastors in terms of teaching mostly. In our language a pastor is referred to as a 'mofundisi,' and mofundisi literally translates to 'a teacher.' So, a pastor is regarded as a teacher. So, congregants they look up to the pastor to lead the teaching ministry, and I think I'm right to say in the book of discipline they expect the pastor to facilitate and be in the forefront in making the teaching ministry happen in the local church. But we also encourage our Christians, our congregants, also to read for themselves. Zimbabwe is blessed in that it has a high literacy rate. In the—in Southern African, in Africa, and in the world. So, people are able to read for themselves. So, we encourage our members to read or so for their spiritual enrichment.

But the question is: 'what would we read?' That where the publishing team would come in to challenge other people to come into writing business. And publishing, so that our members can have something they can rely on. In terms of spiritual growth literature.

MR: Where do people get books if they want to read books? Is—is there a developed book industry in Zimbabwe and is there a developed Christian book industry in Zimbabwe?

GM: Yes! There are. We have some Christian bookstores in the country. Really, we do. We have Scripture Union that we have really resourced, and I have been able to bring into the country some written resources in the form of books. We really do have those.

But we also want, in the United Methodist Church, we want our Christians to be nurtured in our polity as well. That they cannot get elsewhere except from the church. And when we come up with our publications we move around the churches in the district, so that the churches could have some libraries. So, these are all the— some of the books that we have published as a publishing team in Zimbabwe. So, what we would say to churches is that we have every copy of every publication if you do, use that, a library at a local church. So, if a local preacher would want some resources he would, or she would, just walk in and have access. A teacher of a Sunday School class would just walk in the library that is what we are really are urging our churches at least to do. So, we are not yet there, but we will get there.

MR: Yes. What I hear you saying too, is that there is still a big need for local churches in terms of resourcing that they need. Whether— whether that's for the pastor for the Sunday School or church school teachers and for those who are doing different kinds of ministries in the local churches.

So, you know, online technologies are also booming right now all over the world. And if, for example, a preacher does not have a library. He does not have a lot of books that he personally owns. Where would he or she turn to? Where would they get materials that they need for their church?

GM: I think now with the coming up of the technology— internet. Some, not all, some privileged pastors would access those materials on the internet. I'm saying some because we are not all resourced the same. We still have some parts of the country with no electricity, no power. It would be difficult to have access to the internet, with also the costs involved, but we still have a number who would access sources from the internet. But still some still look up to the published for written books.

MR: Right. I want to go back to an earlier question that I asked. You said people are filling up the churches. What are some of the ways the churches and the members are doing that enables them to invite people to come and fill the churches? Can you talk about the evangelism and discipleship that happens in Zimbabwe?

GM: Yes, Mighty. Firstly, evangelism is the agenda of the church. It is taken very seriously. The faith sharing. Once you become a Christian, in Zimbabwe context, you cannot just sit without sharing your experiences—without sharing the Christ with others. So, are members, from an individual level, they are encouraged when they— if made decisions for Christ and Christ has touched their lives and they are transformed, they in turn, have the zeal to share their faith with others. And we also use church structures. We have what we called sections; popularly known in other circles as cells, cell groups. So, it would be up to about 10 families to form a cell group. Once they grow, we divide them we create more cells, and it is their responsibility, within the section, to nurture each other in faith, one. Two— to witness for Christ as a body of Christ so, and also to outreach.

So, because of that we gave and received more and more giving their lives to Christ, and once they grow as a section we divide it and on and on so, we have several and once we have more of those, that's when we would say: "we now have— we can grow and establish another preaching point or another local church." And a local church growing into a charge; a charge growing multiplying into several churches like— I will give an example of a congregation I am pastoring now, Cranborne, it was established as a result of members coming from Highfield circuit.

Now, being allowed as Africans to own properties in those places reserved for white then. So, they started to come into those low-density suburbs, and when they were a sizable number they decided to congregate together, and they started a congregation resulting in Cranborne United Methodist Church being confirmed ... as a church. And Cranborne when they were construed as a— as a charge because of the evangelism thrust they also established another church: Hatfield, and down the line, they established another church: Msasa Park. So, that's how we grew a church. Which is the agenda of the church.

MR: That sounds amazing. And I just wanted to summarize this, you organize the members into families of 10, and then from there they nurture each other, they support each other, and they also invite their neighbors and friends. So that like in your example, the Church from — was it Highfield?

GM: Highfield.

MR: Resulted to Cranborne?

GM: Mhmm

MR: And then that church too created two other churches. Is that right?

GM: Quite right.

MR: So, that's- that's the process. 10 families and- and maybe this is- this is true for African setting. I've seen the small group system work, say for example for: small groups for youth, small groups for young adults, small groups for, you know, like separated according to age groups, but in your setting it's the family that is the unit of the groups in that case 10 families.

GM: Yes. Quite correct. And the cell groups, they become a training ground. For an example, I started preaching in a cell group, because they meet in their homes, they rotate in their homes every- once every week they do meet inviting neighbors asking one of them to preach and some would give testimony- personal testimonies. So, I started preaching in a section setup. You grow in confidence, and you start from a small group and then preaching to big numbers. So small groups play a very significant role in the Zimbabwe context especially in church growth program.

MR: Right, and I am going to tie this back to our conversation on resources and books and booklets. Are there any printed resources that are being used by the small groups, by the sections, or do they go straight to the Bible, or do the assigned preacher get a book or a booklet do their preaching based on that?

GM: Firstly, In- in the cell groups setup, they should have some variety of programs. One week there will be- there will be a preacher, the other week they will be doing Bible study. The other week, it could be receiving a lesson and teaching. So, they use the published material as their resource materials.

So, let's say they are having a lesson on history of United Methodist church in Zimbabwe they will simply come, take this book from the publishing team. The history is well narrated, not only in Zimbabwe, beginning with the history of methodism in England, in the USA, coming to Africa and finally to Zimbabwe. So, they get the resource material from the book. So, the publishing materials come in handy in augmenting those other programs. The east worship program, the east Christian education program, the east evangelism program, the east leadership training program they also were out there to assist the facilitators.

MR: That's a ready resource for the sections and the small groups that is giving the church the opportunity to reach more people in Zimbabwe. So, Gift, I've seen you talk about the impact of the publishing team; the resources and books and booklets you have published. Can you share

any other impact of the publishing team's ministry in the churches in Zimbabwe, and if you can also share about some of the challenges that you are facing as— as a publishing team, as a church needing resources?

GM: Impact first. We now are having more and more of our congregations having well-structured and well-organized church school programs. Before, we used to have a one classroom church school. Like the whole church, it would be used for church school— for Sunday School there's one class, but with cutting off resources. We now have well-structured church school programs having several classes divided into their age groups.

The impact by the resource material. We have the curriculum for Sunday School that we came up with: one for children, the other one for young adults and the other for the adults. So, we've differed in our age groups and different classes that's— that's another impact. The other impact is the revitalization of our congregation. We now have vibrant worship services we have come up with worship resources like — the one of our—our success stories as the publishing team in Zimbabwe is to come up with the Braille hymnbook.

MR: wow, Braille hymnbook that's a hymnbook for blind people, right?

GM: The first Braille hymn book for blind members. We have schools, blind schools for— for blind people. Our United Methodist schools we have classes for the blind. But they need our polity, they need also resources provided by the church. So, we have come up with the Braille hymnbook. It is the first.

We also have translated, we have come up with a hymnal in other languages like Ndebele, the first of its kind, and that helps also in evangelization. If people would come to church and sing in their language, you know, they become more interested and they would invite others. So, already it's impacting positively to the growth of the church and the spiritual growth for our members; really a big impact.... because of our resources

MR: I would just like to add something to what you said because I — I remember a theologian, and a scholar, who once said that one of the strengths of the Christian faith is its translatability and this theologian his name is Lamin Sanneh, and he said that the Christian faith is growing in many different tribes in Africa, especially in those tribes where the name of God in the local language had not been erased. So, the concept of God in the tribe, in their native language is still there and that is when people hear the gospel it makes an impact directly to their hearts, and they can sing, and they can praise god in their own language. Which is what you publishing team is doing. That's beautiful, beautiful ministry.

GM: Yes so, our congregations are being revitalized. Our congregations are having vibrant worship services and you talked about our challenges. Yes, we do have a share of our challenges. I mentioned about the reading culture which, we are trying to address. The costs, we— as Zimbabwe we have our fair share of economy challenges. We have high inflation an official figure ranging about 480%, thereabout, inflation rate. And so, that would bring the

production cost, up and that would not spare the publishing cost as well so, that's a major challenge that we have. We used to have the challenge of having some authors, but we no longer have that challenge because authors are there. We have some manuscripts there ready to be published but inhibiting costs. So, that's one of the biggest challenges that we have.

MR: Yes, and I would also like to say, the publishing team in Zimbabwe is one of the— the team that are moving towards sustainability as a part of the Discipleship Resources International project at Discipleship Ministries, and it has demonstrated its ability to produce resources that help the church be more responsive to the needs of the local churches and of the members. And, so, thank you for sharing some of those impact and challenges, Gift. I know this has been a 10-year project now, a partnership between the Zimbabwe Episcopal area specifically with the publishing team and with Discipleship Ministries. So, as we move into this new decade into this new quadrennium, I would like to ask you what are your hopes and dreams for the future of the production of resources in Zimbabwe and Africa in general, as well as the future of publishing in your country and in Africa?

GM: First and foremost, the partnership between the general church as guided by the General Board of Discipleship and our Episcopal area to continue. That's the desire of my heart. That relationship should always be there. I'm aware that resources especially financial resources from the general church are dwindling down.

Then what I want to see the African church doing is moving towards is moving towards self-reliance, self-sustainability. We need to come as African Church to a point whereby we are independent financially, to a point where we are able to finance for the publication of our materials, to a point where we are able to finance for our ministry programs a point we're able to support our pastors financially to remunerate them, in summary, so they are able to do their work. It is my prayer, it is my hope, that one day the Africa church would be able to stand on its own.

MR: Gift, thank you show much for sharing you heart. That is a big dream and we know that God is behind the church, God is the directing our steps and directing the affairs of the church, and although there are any challenges of the church whether that's on a national or on a global level but at the same time we have God's assurance that God will be with us even until the end right?

GM: and also— Mighty, sorry. And also having our own publishing house built in Zimbabwe, all central conferences share annual conference within a central conference— shared. That's also my other prayer.

MR: Gift, you know I'll be praying for those dreams. Those are big dreams but, you know, because even in the midst of challenges, I know that you, the African church, the Philippine church and really everywhere there are a lot of dreamers who make things possible and when we trust God, when we put together our resources together like this partnership I think beautiful things happen. And I know I have taken on this new role as Central Conference

Relationships Director, I'm taking— I took the reins from Kara Oliver, and Robin Pippin, and Steven Bryant in overseeing Discipleship Resources International Project, but I'm hopeful too, that with the creativity, and the heart, and the vision of United Methodists from Africa, from the Philippines, and from all over that there are many, many possibilities for the resourcing of— of the church locally.

GM: Yes, thank you.

MR: So, Gift, if people want to learn more about your ministries and your projects, how can they find you online? Are you on Facebook or— or what's the best way?

GM: Yes. I'm not a Facebook fan but because of technology really, I have one yes. So, they can find me on Facebook and also, we have a very active Facebook for Cranborne United Methodist Church they can follow what we are doing there as well and yes.

MR: and does the episcopal area of Zimbabwe have a Facebook account or a website?

GM: Yes, we are, there's also— we have a website for Cranborne United Methodist Church and also have a website for— we are in Harare Eastern district, it's in the making. We also have a website for our Zimbabwe East Annual Conference as well as for the Zimbabwe West Annual Conference.

MR: Alright, for you listeners and watchers out there we will be posting those links in the show notes at umdiscipleship.org. So, Gift, this has been a real pleasure talking with you and sharing stories about the ministries you are doing in Africa. This is— this is very educational for me and this also heartwarming. So many beautiful things happening on the ground with the united Methodist church in Zimbabwe

GM: Yes. thank you Mighty for this opportunity to share our story.

MR: Rev. Dr. Gift Kudakwashe Machinga, thank you so much.

GM: Thank you Mighty.

Links mentioned during interview:

Gift's church— Cranborne UMC official website

<http://cranborneumc.org/>

and Facebook page

<https://www.facebook.com/cranborneumc/>

Zimbabwe East Annual Conference Facebook Page

<https://www.facebook.com/zeacumc/>

Zimbabwe West Annual Conference Facebook Page

<https://www.facebook.com/pages/category/Organization/Zimbabwe-West-Annual-Conference-123132824192/>