Dear Ukama Partnership Friends,

It has been a year of extraordinary change in our ministries, both here in the US and in Zimbabwe. Responses to the Pandemic have been the most notable. I certainly did not come close to imagining that we’d be offering ideas for Ukama Sunday 2021 still needing guidance for online worship.

Whatever our circumstances, our Ukama, our relationship, with the people of the United Church of Christ in Zimbabwe, is very much worth celebrating.

We try to celebrate Ukama Sunday as close as possible to the anniversary date of the establishing of the United Church in Zimbabwe, which took place Oct 19, 1893. However, the NH Conference Annual meeting worship will be available to our congregations online on October 17. So the Ukama Mission Group agreed that our official Ukama Sunday is October 24. Of course, each of our Ukama congregations can choose the day that works best for you. Our partners in the UCCZ will know that the ‘official’ day for us is the 24th.

Rev. Frederick Thodhana, a pastor of the UCCZ, has released an album in 2019 which is accessible on YouTube. The link below connects to that album.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ul8EYnIYw8&feature=youtu.be

Or, just key in “Rev Fredrick Thodhana” in Youtube and a number of his songs will show up. I think Rev. Thondhana is curating UCCZ’s Facebook Group, which we commend to you.

The Revised Common Lectionary for October 24th are not great for an Ukama celebration. Last year’s were much better- Matthew 22:34-46—“Love the Lord your God... and love your neighbor as yourself.” And 1 Thess 2:1-8 text with the wonderful line: “So deeply do we care for you that we are determined to share with you not only the Gospel of God but also our very selves, because you have become very dear to us.”

We are reaching out to our Ukama partners in the UCCZ and hope to have some video clips or other items which we can incorporate into our worship or other ways you might be lifting up our relationships with our family in the UCCZ.

Blessings be with you as you celebrate our Ukama Partnership through your worship and prayers Your Ukama Mission Group will be very happy to hear of your meaningful worship should you desire to share the ways that you honor our Ukama Partnership in your local church worship services.

One thing that is a good outcome from the pandemic is that we are more connected via the internet with our partners in Zimbabwe. We encourage you to reach out directly to your partner church. If you don’t have contact info, email me at my address below and I’ll pass your request to the UCCZ’s Ukama Mission Committee.

The suggestions below may work in online worship, but many assume in person worship.

In peace,

Rev. David Keller Chairperson, Ukama Mission Group davidandlindy@myfairpoint.net
Some Prayer Suggestions:

This prayer comes from the World Council of Churches Prayer Cycle

Prayer from Zimbabwe

Lord God,
we give you thanks for sending your only Son to give us life.
In the midst of wealth we are crushed by poverty,
and while we are offered Christ-life in all its fullness,
we are surrounded by disease, death and destruction.
We are tempted to despair, and yet keep hoping,
knowing that you care.
At times we weep silent tears, and cry out with deep emotion.
We come to you, our only hope and refuge.
Thank you for the gift of laughter,
even when the going is tough.
With you, O Lord, we may be troubled but not destroyed.


Unison Prayer (from Zimbabwe)
Open my eyes that they may see the deepest needs of the people; move my hands that they may feed the hungry; touch my heart that it may bring warmth to the despairing; teach me the generosity that welcomes strangers; let me share my possessions to clothe the naked; give me the care that strengthens the sick; make me share in the quest to set the prisoner free. In sharing our anxieties and our love, our poverty and our prosperity, we partake of your divine presence.

(adapted from A Procession of Prayers, ed. John Carden, c. 1998 by World Council of Churches Publications.)

An Opening Prayer (Africa) From Janet Morley, Bread of Tomorrow, Orbis Books
Holy One, enlarge my heart,
that it may be big enough to receive the greatness of your love.
Holy One, stretch my heart,
that it may take into it all those,
who with me around the world, believe in Jesus Christ.
Then stretch it again
that it may take into it all those who do not know Christ,
but who are my brothers and sisters because I know him.
And stretch it still, that it may take in all those
who are not lovely in my eyes
and those hands I do not want to touch.
Enlarge my heart, O God, through Jesus Christ, my Savior. Amen

Prayer of Dedication: (Zimbabwe) from Maren Tirabassi’s Gifts of Many Cultures
God of All Good, our gifts we bring to you. May they be multiplied and blessed, as the fish and the loaves were. Little though our offering is, but meaningful in love, may it be. May they be received as tokens of our love. Amen.
Some Song Suggestions:

_Tinotenda Jesu_ is a song from Zimbabwe that has blessed many an Ukama gathering. The simplicity of sentiment (Thank You Jesus, Alleluia, Amen) and ease of singing can bless the whole congregation. The words are:

_Tinotenda Jesu. Tinotenda Jesu. Tinotenda Jesu. Alleluia, Amen._


Another simple song for worship and a good introit is “Uyai Mose.” You may have this as “Come All You People” in a Hymnal or Praise Song book on your shelves. It was also included in “Come All You People: Shorter Songs for Worship” and “Sing with the World” from the Iona Community. You can find many versions of this on youtube if you would like to hear it or learn it orally. The words are:

**Shona:**

_Uyai mose, tinamate Mwari;
Uyai mose, tinamate Mwari;
Uyai mose, tinamate Mwari;
Uyai mose zvino._

**English:**

_Come all you people, Come and praise your Maker._

_Come all you people, Come and praise your Maker._

_Come all you people, Come and praise your Maker._

_Come now and worship the Lord._

Additionally, at the end of each worship service in Zimbabwe, the congregation sings the benediction together. Just saying it together connects us with our family in Zimbabwe.

_May the words of my mouth, and the meditations of my heart,_

_Be acceptable in Thy sight, O Lord, my strength and my redeemer._

_Amen. Amen. Amen._

Some Ritual/Custom Suggestions:

Here’s some ritual suggestions for the celebration, adapted for the way we’ve been worshiping during the pandemic:

**Hand washing** is an act of hospitality among members of the churches and a ritual that begins every church meal. Offering it in the traditional is probably not a covid-safe practice. But how about someone offering hand sanitizer to worshipers as they enter the church? Or, if your worship is online, you could show a pitcher, towel, and basin, maybe have one pair offer water and wash hands as your worship opens.

**Offering:** In UCCZ churches, the offering is gathered up by a number of people who walk through the congregation and receive it in bags, baskets, bowls and even on open hymn books or Bibles. Sometimes it is brought forward, often with people dancing! At many of the churches the offering is counted as it is received, so that the amount given can be announced and celebrated.

Even in churches which are offering in-person worship, the offering is not received by ushers passing the plate. But the offering may be announced. So, as it is announced, have someone stand with an open Bible, maybe even lay a bill in it.

Last year, we issued an appeal for funds to alleviate food insecurity in Zimbabwe, and your response was fantastic! You can find some pictures of people there receiving the food on the Ukama page of the NH Conference web site.
Worship in Zimbabwe is filled with singing and dancing, accompanied by drumming and hoshos (gourd-like seed-filled shakers). Most every aspect of worship is wrapped in song. Generally, one person simply begins singing, and the others will join in on the hymn. And the dancing also seems to begin spontaneously, until all are in the act! It seems that most know all the verses to all the hymns! Not everyone has a hymnal. When someone is asked to pray, he or she will usually sing a verse of a hymn before praying. You may choose to include drums and rhythm instruments in your hymn singing.

I shared this video “The Blessing Zimbabwe” and it’s well worth using it again. No dancing, but what a benediction!

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OA1tV57VncY

Which suggests that, if your church’s Ukama committee or person hunts around, you’ll probably find some great resources for making Ukama Sunday a truly moving experience. Get going! Try stuff! And let your Ukama Mission Group know if there’s ways we can help, or if there’s resources you found and would like to share with others.

I do have pdf’s of some Shona hymns which, if you ask me, I can send. Given restrictions on singing, they may not be useful this year.

You can email me personally at davidandlindy@myfairpoint.net, or the Mission Group at ukamaboard@nhucc.org.

May God continue to bless our Ukama, and our churches as we celebrate this rich relationship.

Peace,

David Keller, for the UMG