



December 15, 2019

To: The family and friends of Tawanda Chandiwana

From: Thomas G. Kemper, General Secretary

Tawanda, our son and brother, has now joined the eternal company of those men and women who have said “yes” to God’s call to mission service. We weep in the loss of his physical presence and his daily witness to faith in God through Jesus Christ; we miss his bright smile, his boundless energy, and his thoughtful contemplation.

And we rejoice that he was among us, if even for too short a time. Tawanda was a young example of strong commitment to the acceptance of God’s love and then the sharing of it with others, to the achievement of justice for all, and to the demonstration of courage under oppression. When jailed for two months in the Philippines in the summer of 2018, he was more concerned for his family in Zimbabwe and his missionary colleagues in Mindanao than for himself. I was privileged to visit him near the end of that incarceration. “How is my mother?” he wanted to know. “Does she know I am okay? I don’t want her to worry.”

He was detained on erroneous suspicion of subversion for taking part in an investigation of human rights violations. He believed that deliverance would come because God was with him at all times. He harbored no bitterness against his jailers and kept his faith in the goodness of human beings even as he dared to challenge injustice and risked the consequences for taking a stance for what is right.

Tawanda was kind, caring and considerate, a sterling credit to his family, his local church, his university and the missionary community of The United Methodist Church. Indeed, he was a child of Methodism--from his youth at Hilltop Church, through his years at Africa University, and his two years as a Global Mission Fellow in Mindanao. In that work, he is remembered, to quote a colleague, as an inspiration to others “by showing strength, resiliency, and strong faith, especially during the time of his detention.”

Tawanda felt a strong sense of connection to other Global Mission Fellows and to the larger missionary community. The anchor cross all United Methodist missionaries wear was his treasure. He told me when I saw him in jail a story about an incident involving the cross. Someone he encountered in the penal system saw the anchor cross and remarked that he must be a sailor. “No,” he replied, “I’m a missionary and I’m anchored in Christ.”

Global Ministries prays that God’s grace and consolation will be with his family, with his church community in Zimbabwe and with his Global Mission Fellows cohort around the world.

We rejoiced with him in life and, now, we commend Tawanda to the providence of God and the joy of heaven, through Jesus Christ.