



# FIRST FRIDAY LETTER

The World Methodist Council

July 2018

## Message from the General Secretary...



Dear Friends,

It is all systems go at our headquarters in Lake Junaluska and Kwanglim Methodist Church as we prepare for the World Council Meeting from 12-15 July in Seoul, South Korea. Council will be an opportunity to be reunited with old friends and meet new ones. At Council, we will share in vibrant worship, pray together, feel the heartbeat and pulse of global Methodism, and cast a new vision for the future.

During June, I was privileged to join Methodist young people from all parts of the world at Metanoia (formerly known as the International Youth Conference) in Costa Rica. If the enthusiasm, commitment, and passion of the young adults is anything to go by, I am very optimistic about the future of our church. Thank you to Kimberly Reisman and her team for teaching

me fresh ways to communicate the Good News of Jesus Christ to a new generation.

The Geneva Secretary, Bishop Rosemarie Wenner, and I participated in the Central Committee of the World Council of Churches and the 70th Anniversary Celebrations in Geneva. One of the highlights of the celebrations was Pope Francis' visit, described as an "ecumenical pilgrimage." The Central Committee theme was "Walking, praying and working together." The Central Committee relaunched the Thursday in Black Campaign. I wish to encourage all Methodists to observe this campaign as an expression of our commitment to speak out against gender-based violence and create a just society of equity between women and men.

Next month, I will share in the Nelson Mandela centenary celebrations. I look forward to stories of how Methodists around the world promote active citizenship and build communities to revive the legacy of this son of Methodism and global icon. We will also carry a bumper edition of the First Friday Letter with reports and pictures of our Council Meeting in Seoul.

In this issue of FFL you will learn about the 10th Joint European Areas Seminar Belfast June 2018, the New Director of Evangelism and Growth for the Methodist Church as well as the New General Secretary for the Nazarene Church. You will learn how Florida United Methodists are helping Puerto Rican Refugees, about The Differing Worlds of Israel and Palestine, and how a Summer Camp offers Migrant Youth Fun and Friendship. You will also read about the Week of Prayer from the Methodist Liaison Office in Jerusalem, the 2018 European Methodist Festival, and hear the Parting message from UCA President Stuart McMillan.

Your partner in Mission and Ministry,

Ivan

## 10th Joint European Areas Seminar Belfast June 2018



The second of eight Area Seminars was almost on my doorstep! I had visited Belfast before as Area President of the Britain and Ireland Area so knew I would find my way without difficulty (but it was still wonderful to be met at the airport!) It was heart-warming to realise that I recognised so many of the women, not only from my own Area but also from 'Europe: Continental' as we had been together in Rome just four years ago for the 2014 Seminar. Amongst the upheaval caused by the Brexit referendum, it is encouraging to discover that Methodist women from 20 countries across Europe can worship, pray, celebrate, learn and share together so powerfully.

The World Officers were the first to arrive and we met briefly to update one another on developments on the World Federation study day resource, the Bossey scholarship, finance and the calendar for the next three years, including our next World Executive meeting in Hong Kong in March 2019. We were also able to meet with three enthusiastic and willing women from Sweden who will form the Local Arrangements Committee for the 14th World Assembly in Gothenburg in August 2021. I am already thanking God for them!

The four Area Officers, Louise, Lidia, Carolyn and Lilla, most of their Unit Presidents and two Helen Kim Memorial Scholars (HKMS) met with us for the Weaving Together Programme, a time of mutual learning which included use of the Ketso resource ([www.ketso.com](http://www.ketso.com)) to identify achievements, concerns and priorities for action. Rev Walla Carlsson from Sweden presided at our closing communion service. Unit reports will appear on our website's Area pages.

As women arrived at the Clayton Hotel for registration, it was clear that the planning team were well organised and that each, including three HKMS, had a task to do in welcoming the 170 women of the two European Areas. The opening meal set the tone for the rest of the event, being plentiful, well presented and on time. The newly-appointed Mayor of Belfast greeted us and the Methodist College girls' choir sang beautifully following our meal.

I was delighted to discover that the theme introduced at the World Assembly in Houston 'Chosen People: Called to Proclaim' was so effectively revisited at this Area Seminar. One of the three ways in which we 'proclaim our faith' provided the focus for each day: 'worship' on the Friday, 'relationships' on the Saturday and engaging in 'social action' on the Sunday. Highlights for me were the times of worship and singing, the bible study on Acts 10 led by Gillian Kingston, World Vice-President of the World Methodist Council, a presentation on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by World Federation Vice-President Matilda Johnson and the Helen Kim Memorial Scholars' presentation with their chaplain Janice Clark. I wish I could have gone to all the creative worship workshops on the Friday but was pleased to find I could hear from each SDG workshop presenter on the Sunday (Two of these led by HKMS) and find further inspiration in the prayer room. Conversations in table groups were special too as new international friendships were formed.

Melanie, Val, and Wendy led the worship session I nearly didn't go on an outing on the Saturday afternoon but was glad I changed my mind and joined the guided tour on an open-top double-decker bus that took us around the city of Belfast and explained some of the history and how it is impacting the current inhabitants. The evening celebration included traditional Irish dancers who left many of us feeling exhausted as well as delighted by their youthful energy and skill.

On the Sunday afternoon, a few women took the opportunity to join the procession through Belfast celebrating 100 years of women's suffrage in the UK. I was glad they did

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and were able to report back to the rest of us before our closing communion, showing photos of this historic, significant and inspirational event.

As we dispersed on the Monday morning, I was thankful to be able to visit, thanks to Ireland's HKMS Wanda Hogan, a former World President, Dr Edith Loane, now in her 90's and too frail to attend the seminar. Edith has, for many years, been an inspiration to many women in Ireland and globally so it was a particular joy for me to be able to visit her and pray with her before flying back to Southampton

Please continue to pray for your World Officers as they seek to serve the Federation and travel great distances as 'chosen people: called to proclaim'. Please also pray for the church in Bulgaria, anxious that a law may soon be passed that could severely restrict their ministry.

Thank you, Alison

## With One Heart and Voice in God's Mission

In a Peanuts cartoon, Lucy walked in on Linus watching TV, and demanded that he switch channels. "What makes you think you can walk right in here and take over?" Linus retorted.

Said Lucy, holding up her fist: "These five fingers... Individually, they're nothing, but when I curl them together like this into a single unit, they form a weapon that is terrible to behold!"

"Which channel do you want?" Linus surrendered. Turning away, he looked at his fingers and sighed, "Why can't you guys get organised like that?"

The Church is no stranger to the power of unity – though it has a markedly different motivation and purpose.

Jesus prayed for the Church before offering Himself on the Cross (John 17). What was in His heart? Towards the end of His High Priestly Prayer, Jesus prayed that the Church would be united in its mission. We need to notice His words:

"that all of them may be one, Father..." (John 17:21, NIV)

"that they may be one as we are one..." (John 17:22, NIV)

"that they may be brought to complete unity. Then the world will know that you sent me..." (John 17:23, NIV)

The kind of unity that Jesus wanted in the Church is a supernatural one, not a brittle unity tinkered together by political convenience or manufactured by managerial genius.

The Lord has high standards for us when He thinks of our unity. It is a 'complete' unity that has the Trinity as its standard and source. We are to be one as the Three Persons in the Trinity are one. And this can happen only as we are immersed in the life of the triune God ("I in them and you in me"; John 17:23, NIV).

Such spirituality is the work of God who brings us to the unity of the Spirit. This unity is essential because the

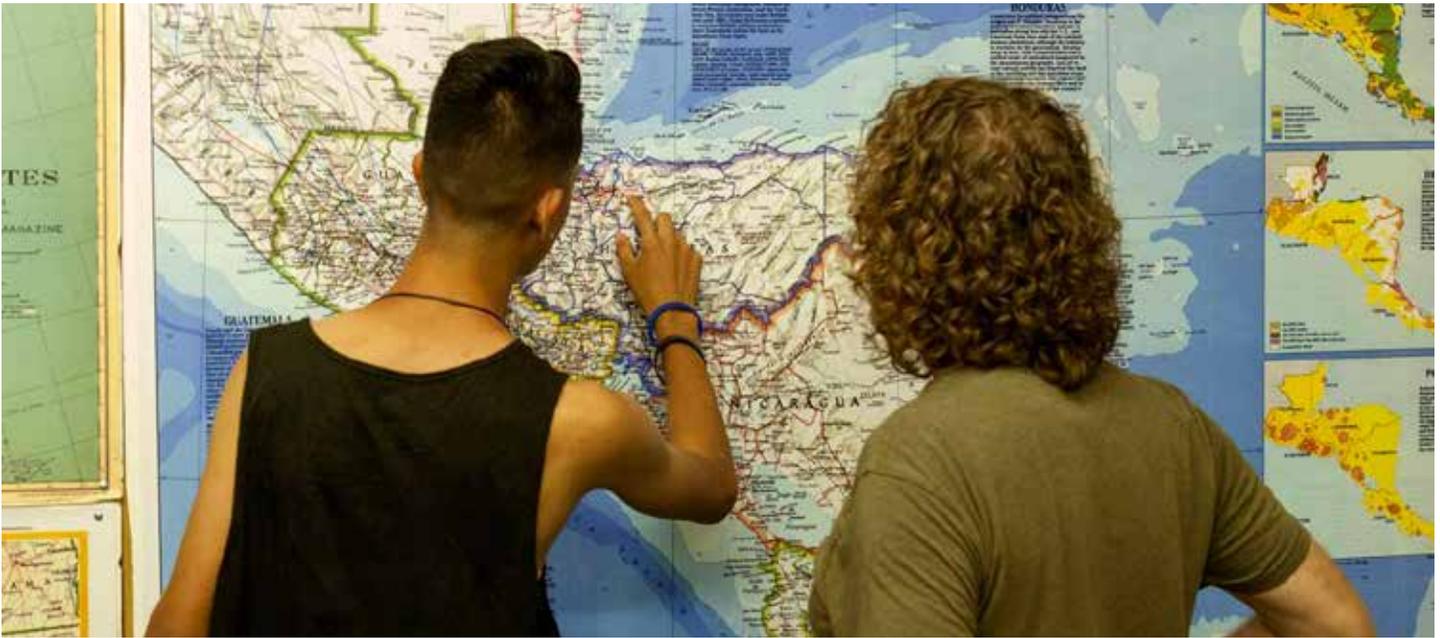


evangelisation of the world depends on it. Worldly concepts of unity are often used for the flexing of organisational muscle, or for self-glorification of the united group. However, the unity of the Church is for a more lofty purpose – our participation in the mission of God.

As we turn to God in humility, repentance and faith, He blesses us with His love (Romans 5:8), making us one by the power of the Cross (Ephesians 2:14-16), so that we develop one heart and voice in our witness to the world (Romans 15:5-6). It is this united witness that will convince the world that Jesus is Lord and Saviour.

Let us prayerfully seek this unity so that God may be glorified and the world may receive the liberating and transforming gospel of Christ.

*Bishop Emeritus Dr Robert Solomon was Bishop of The Methodist Church in Singapore from 2000 to 2012. He is one of the keynote speakers at the upcoming GoForth National Missions Conference from 21 to 23 June 2018.*



## Camp Offers Migrant Youth Fun and Friendship

For four days in June, United Methodist Camp Colby is a respite for children and teens who traveled a long, dark and dangerous journey.

These children, some as young as 8, are known as unaccompanied migrants and they arrive on the border of California alone and afraid. Their families in Central America send them away to escape gang violence and hopefully start a new better life for themselves in the U.S.

United Methodist leaders in the California-Pacific Conference started thinking about a way to show them welcome and shine God's love on them. The results is No Estan Solos, You Are Not Alone.

Just like thousands of U.S. children attending summer camps, these Central American children get four days to go hiking, sing around a campfire, make crafts out of construction paper and glue, and find best friends for life.

The retreat and church-based welcome centers were established by the conference in 2014 in response to the thousands of unaccompanied minors coming into Southern California primarily from Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador and Nicaragua, said the Rev. David Berkey, director of Camping Ministries and Operations for the conference.

“Along the way and in their home country, they experience trauma in many forms,” Berkey said. “Once here, they are put into the U.S. immigration system, given paperwork as refugees seeking asylum and released to the community awaiting processing which can take years.”

The kids, who usually speak no English, end up in the care of agencies, enroll in school and try to adapt to U.S. culture and life, Berkey said.

A \$350,000 grant from the United Methodist Committee on Relief was used to create welcoming congregations and other programs like the retreat in the California-Pacific Conference. In 2016 two additional events were added — an Advent retreat for girls at Aldersgate Retreat Center and an overnight hike retreat for boys at Camp Sturtevant.

A young boy plays ukele at United Methodist Camp Colby. Photo courtesy of California-Pacific Conference. The church's compassionate embrace of these young people is needed now more than ever, said the Rev. David Farley, director of Justice and Compassion Ministries for the conference.

## Camp Offers Migrant Youth Fun and Friendship continued

“It is crucial to continue and to grow this ministry in these times of increased cruelty when families are being separated, or incarcerated with their children, when children like these and their families are criminalized for seeking asylum and sent back to the violence from which they have fled. We give thanks to God that we have this program in place at this crucial time,” Farley said.

The first camp in 2015 had 38 campers — ages 10 to 18 — referred from agencies in Los Angeles.

“The design was to help them feel welcome, share their story with one another, find community and support in small groups and envision a healthy future,” Berkey said.

“They told their stories in skits and through art, traced their journeys on the map of Central America on the wall, played and enjoyed normal camp activities, and created a mural of their hopes and dreams for the future. We also provided limited health support while at camp.”

Berkey said they learned a lot from that first year and started revising the program. The second year had 48 junior high and high school age campers. The third year, they decided to take all children and youth who applied, ending up with more than 80 campers.

That was too much for their limited staff, Berkey said.

“We had 30 show up this year, junior high and high school ages, 13-17, 10 boys and 20 girls. Forty had enrolled but some got scared to come, as has happened every year, and some had summer school. Each year the planning gets better as we learn and we have a strong staff doing this ministry,” he said.

The camp is conducted in Spanish with bilingual leaders coached by Jennifer Berry, camp director, and Broghan Hunt, program manager.

“Each year we have about 50-50 returnees and new campers,” Berkey said. “They do not pay for camp. It is funded 100 percent out of the grant and donations.”

Since the UMCOR grant ran out in 2017, funding for the



2018 camp has come from donors and other grants, he added.

One unexpected benefit from the camp has been that the children and teens who once viewed each other as being from rival countries and cultures are finding they have a lot more in common and are finding friendship and support, too, Berkey said.

“They were asked at camp in one activity to vision their life five years from now through art. They created a mural in which they saw themselves as lawyers, nurses, in business, parents, living in the U.S. and happy. It was very moving,” he said.

Farley said they try to keep the campers connected with one of a network of welcoming United Methodist congregations. Those include Huntington Park United Methodist Church, San Fernando Valley Refugee Children Center Inc., Claremont United Methodist Church (Spanish) and IMU Manantial de Vida y Luz, United Methodist Church Escondido.

The camp is making a difference for the kids, Farley said.

Farley said as one of the children was getting back on the bus to leave No Estan Solos Retreat, he turned to his counselor and said, “This has been the best week of my life!”

By Kathy L. Gilbert June 26, 2018 | UMNS



*Children rummage through the rubbish in a skip looking for food. With the cuts to UNWRA poor children in Gaza are now going hungry.*

## WMC Week of Prayer - Methodist Liaison Office in Jerusalem

Join us as we pray for Peace in Gaza and the Holy Land  
Gaza

Since Good Friday 2018, when civil organisations in Gaza began the “March of Return” protests, at least 123 Gazans have died, an estimated 17,000 have needed medical help and 4,000 have been hit by live fire.

Heavenly Father we pray for all those who have been bereaved, injured, lost limbs or traumatised by the events of the last weeks. As people continue to protest we pray that they may do so peacefully and without threat of injury.  
Amen.

Living conditions in Gaza continue to deteriorate. Almost all the water is unsafe to drink, sewage pours untreated into the sea (creating a terrible smell), Electricity is on for only four hours a day, many have insufficient food, many common medicines cannot be obtained.

Lord we pray for an end to the blockade of Gaza, for reconciliation between Hamas and Fatah, and for a just resolution of the issues in dispute over Gaza, so that the ordinary people of Gaza can receive the services most of us take for granted.  
Amen.

Unemployment amongst youths in Gaza is amongst the highest in the world. Some estimates put it at 85%. At the same time the military wings of militant organisations offer a steady wage to young people who will take up arms.

Lord we pray that young people will not be persuaded to join armed groups, and that the ways of non violent resistance may be followed by the young of Gaza.  
Amen.

Hospitals, clinics and other medical facilities are being overcome by the sheer numbers of casualties. We pray for hard pressed doctors and nurses trying to provide modern standards of care without the medicines and facilities needed.

Loving Father, we give thanks for the dedication and generosity of medical charities and of Doctors and Nurses. Bless their skills and give encouragement to them as they face huge challenges.  
Amen.

## WMC Week of Prayer continued

Lord Jesus, when you walked the streets of Palestine, you knew what it was like to live under occupation. You cared for soldier and civilian alike. You walked the extra mile in the example you gave of love in action, even across the divisions of your time. We pray today for the people of the Holy Land, Israeli and Palestinian, Jew, Muslim, Druze and Christian. In this rich and diverse population there is so much fear, so much suspicion, so much hatred, so much injustice, so much history and so much division. Inspire your people today with that same love you showed so long ago and that same quest for justice – that we may overcome the failings of the past and enable a new community to grow where all the children of Abraham may live in Peace with one another, in mutual respect. May all the people of this land turn away from violence and hatred, learn anew of how to respect each other and find that true Shalom where every person is valued, every right respected and every dream cherished. We pray in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, who proclaimed blessed are the peacemakers, in every age.

Amen.

We thank you Lord for the excavations in Gaza that reveal a historical narrative for the people of Gaza. We pray for those who use their gifts to restore lovingly and faithfully the story of the past. We pray for all that has been found as a result of excavations of an area that was rich in resources, that people from all the areas of the known world at the time would travel to buy the produce of the land and trade. That it was and is a vibrant place that given the opportunity has so much to offer to neighboring areas. Lord thank you for the rich past and history of Gaza and its people, as we pray for its future for a just solution and a way forward that it may be a place of great industry once again.

Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer.

Amen.

We pray for the Near East Council of Churches in Gaza, for the leaders and the approximately 1000 Christians. We hold the issues the leadership have concerning the reduction of numbers of Christians. We pray for their continued struggles as a minority people, their faith, vision and commitment to the Lord seeking to live in harmony with their neighbours. We pray for the projects the churches are

involved in, that they may receive continued support from partners around the world. We pray for all organisations that seek to offer aid, hope and support for the people of Gaza, remembering that UNWRA has reduced drastically their funding. For the devastating affect this has had on the various organisations and the fearful concern the people of the land have as a result. We thank you Lord for those who continue to offer assistance, may there be others who are willing to offer such needy support that Gaza faces at this time.

Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer.

Amen.



*The trauma of having lived through the 2014 Gaza War remains with the children of Gaza. In a clinic run by the Near East Council of Churches children share in a trauma therapy session.*

We pray for the people of Gaza as they continue go about their daily routines, realising the restrictions they face concerning freedom of movement. We pray that the movement of trucks bringing resources into the Gaza strip would increase the necessary resources into the land. We pray for the continued lack of permits for the people to be able to leave the Gaza Strip for urgent medical assistance, visiting religious sites during festivals. We remember the many families that have not been able to visit families living elsewhere in the West Bank. We praise you for the opportunity the staff of the Methodist Liaison Office had to visit some families and receive amazing hospitality, to hear their stories, difficulties, hardship and joys during their recent

visit. We thank you for the permits obtained to visit Gaza and learn more of the effects the siege has on the people's lives to be able to return and share their stories, reminding the Methodist World Church that the people of Gaza desire us not to forget them and to continue to hold them and their situation in prayer. That the Methodist World Church would be a prophetic voice that upholds justice and advocates for freedom and the humanitarian rights of the people of Gaza. Lord hear our prayer, Lord graciously hear us. Amen

On the 20th of June two boats which are taking part in the Freedom Flotilla to Gaza arrived in Lisbon, Portugal. The 'Al Awda' (the 'Return') and 'Freedom' have 25 activists on board and hundreds of people greeted their arrival. These boats and several other boats are heading towards Gaza in a new attempt to break the eleven- year Israeli siege. Two other boats arrived in Paris, but the French

police prevented them from landing along the River Seine. Nevertheless, hundreds of supporters waved Palestinian flags while standing on the banks of the river, to cheer them on their journey.

Lord, we thank you for people who care about those living under siege in Gaza. We are grateful for the actions of those living abroad who seek to give a voice to those who are oppressed. Lord may they depend on your strength for you are 'a stronghold in times of trouble' Psalm 9:9. Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer. Amen.

Communion Liturgy: A resource from Sabeel, a Palestinian Ecumenical Christian Liberation Center in Jerusalem, shared with permission. [www.sabeel.org](http://www.sabeel.org)

This story originally appeared at <http://methodist-liaison.org/worship-resources/wmc-week-of-prayer>

## World Methodist Museum a Vital Resource



Ask members of First United Methodist Church, "Who is my neighbor?" and by their actions, they answer, "Whomever God sends to us." After hurricanes Irma and Maria devastated Puerto Rico and plunged its 3.4 million people into a desperate humanitarian crisis late last summer, the 360-member Florida congregation in Kissimmee sprang into action, reaching out to refugees who fled to the U.S. mainland. Many of these U.S. citizens relocated to central Florida.

Through the church's bilingual ministry "Casa de Paz"

and the Community Hope Center, United Methodists here have received and assisted more than 600 Puerto Rican families who arrived in the Orlando metropolitan area seeking stability and a chance to rebuild their lives.

First United Methodist Church's Hispanic pastor, the Rev. Jose Nieves, grew up in Puerto Rico. He and a team of volunteers and the Community Hope Center provide basic supplies such as water, hot meals, meal vouchers, backpacks, school supplies, clothing, haircuts and grocery gift cards as well as provisional housing (rents, deposits and utilities).

Even before the most recent hurricanes, many Puerto Rican families had left the island because of the economic crisis and were living in Florida hotels. “Now,” Nieves said, “they are living together with those who escaped the devastation. They have been creating a huge area in Orlando and Kissimmee with growing needs for care and support.” With the Community Hope Center, First United Methodist Church walks refugees through social services. “There are not just poor people affected,” Nieves noted. “We have a large number of educated people with bachelor’s and master’s degrees, nurses, teachers, mechanics. Most of them do not know how to access social services because they never used them before.”

The Rev. Mary Downey is a deacon in the Florida Conference and the Hope Center’s executive director. “We are not only responding to their physical needs,” Downey said. “We are also addressing the trauma and the spiritual needs that come along with going through that kind of devastation.”

Nieves said he has to keep reminding hurricane survivors that “this is not your fault. You have done nothing wrong. You are not being punished.”

A nonprofit organization, the Hope Center has a proven history of meeting human need. For years, the center has assisted families who face poverty and homelessness and live in motels and hotels in Orlando and Kissimmee.

Today, the agency has broadened its scope to serve not only impoverished people but also those facing “a situation out of their hands,” Downey said.

Developing affordable housing is high on the list of center priorities. Meanwhile, the center collaborates with the United Methodist Committee on Relief to provide emergency assistance with food and shelter.

The center also cooperates with the Federal Emergency Management Agency, which provides social services, and with bipartisan Florida congressional representatives for long-term housing alternatives. “Whoever wants to help with the situation,” Nieves said, “we coordinate together.”

He said about 400 families who survived the hurricanes continue living in hotels in Osceola and Orange counties, despite impending FEMA deadlines for their departure. The church helps other families with rent, water and electricity deposits to help them transition into stable housing.

In addition, approximately 1,500 families are still staying with relatives, often in crowded conditions. Florida political leaders, social organizations, First United Methodist Church and Puerto Rican government authorities have requested FEMA extensions to their service coverage and housing-support deadlines. On April 24, Nieves meet with Puerto Rico

Gov. Ricardo Rosselló. Nieves said Rosselló expressed “his commitment to work with FEMA for an extension until June 30 in order to allow students to finish their school year.”

‘Proud to be United Methodist’ Another important service is identity recovery. During and after the disaster, many people lost their identification, and Hope Center helps them to recover their documents. Through an interdenominationally supported organization



called “IDignity of Osceola,” hurricane survivors recover birth certificates, Social Security cards and other documents that allow them to receive community and social services.

According to Nieves, the ministry with Puerto Rican families is all about faith and Wesleyan ethics.

Many refugees, he said, “come from a culture that the church is always asking for money. Prosperity gospel is very prominent in Puerto Rico. So, to have a church that says we will give you our Christmas Eve offering – we will give our largest offering day to help you – has been awesome.

“I am super proud to be Methodist,” Nieves added. “This connection that brings together [First United Methodist Church and hurricane survivors] cannot be easily dismissed.”

Downey said the church has been intentional about being “in the right place, at the right time, talking with the right people, to bring as much awareness to the situation as possible. We are doing this because of our deep faith and because we are United Methodist.”

She noted that “Congressional leaders have expressed their support and desire to work with the church, for the commitment and seriousness that have been demonstrated. They have seen that we have brought results to the table,” Downey said. “We have not just been saying, ‘Let’s have a prayer.’ Prayers are important; people are asking us to pray for them.”

Along with prayer, Nieves said, when multiple churches commit their offerings, along with resources and

people, “this is a real commitment. This is changing the face of central Florida. The families ... will never forget how The United Methodist Church helped.”

‘God going before us’  
“God is putting people in front of us that have been helpful to serve the Puerto Rican community,” Downey said, mentioning several situations in which they found providential solutions and alternatives.

One example was a gift of \$200,000 that the center received from an organization in Seattle. “We used it to hire case managers and to open spaces (in partnership with UMCOR) to receive and relocate families,” she said. “It came from the initiative of a former congresswomen when I told her what we were doing. Then she made a phone call to a foundation, and they said, ‘We want to invest in your organization and help you address these needs.’ There is no way that I can look at this situation and not see the Holy Spirit and God going before us.”

“God was before us, with us and in front of us,” agreed Nieves.

The City University of New York’s Center for Puerto Rican Studies estimated that Puerto Rico would lose 470,000 residents by 2019 as consequence of the hurricanes. Individuals and groups are urgently needed to address survivors’ continuing needs, the pastor said.

“We have several deadlines in the future when thousands of families will be without the help of FEMA to stay in a hotel,” Nieves said. “We are trying desperately to see how many families we can help. This is humanitarian crisis that is changing the whole area in a way that I can’t even fully understand.”

They are seeking housing, job opportunities, English-as-a-Second-Language specialists, financial support (\$3,000 to \$5,000 to sponsor a family) and mission volunteer teams who can work in central Florida and Puerto Rico.

Vasquez is the director of Hispanic/Latino Communications at United Methodist Communications. Contact her at 615-742-5470 or [newsdesk@umcom.org](mailto:newsdesk@umcom.org).

## European Methodist Festival 2018 – When Dreams Become Reality



By: Klaus Ulrich Ruof (Germany) and Urs Schweizer (Switzerland)

It was in 2012. The European Methodist Council had planned to organize a European Methodist Festival in Krakow (Poland). However, due to the fact that not enough people had registered for this event by a certain time, this Festival regretfully had to be cancelled. And the question was: In times of an increasing individualism and political segregation – would there ever again be such a European Methodist Festival?

There were skeptics in many parts of Europe, but then the weekend of Ascension 2018 was drawing closer – and what was about to happen at Dünenhof near Cuxhaven (Germany), right on the North Sea, put all the skeptics right.

About 850 people of all generations, from many different countries all over Europe and also from the USA, powerfully proved that the connection among the Methodists in Europe is still alive indeed. This was the first reason to marvel, which is the English translation of the event name «STAUNEN».

In the past, «STAUNEN» was a festival of the North Germany Annual Conference of The United Methodist Church, and the majority of steering committee members and volunteers still came from this area. But they were ready to make their festival more European, more international, more colorful, more diverse, and therefore people from other parts of Europe were included in the preparations, as well.

The plenary activities such as singing and faith sharing, evening programs, or worship services took place in a big tent. Bible studies focusing on the same Bible text but being offered in a variety of forms were held at different places – and so were about 30 afternoon workshops that covered a huge spread of issues: migrants, resilience, listening prayer, ministry with Roma, identity, discovery and preservation of creation, the Bible and homoerotic love, Poetry-Slam, natural science and faith, etc. In between, there were the so-called «STAUNEN-groups», where about a dozen of people each, all speaking the same language, met and had an opportunity to share their thoughts about the Bible studies they had heard in the morning or simply to share about themselves and their faith journey.

All these different program parts helped people to experience facets of the theme «You have set my feet in a broad place». And many people witnessed that their faith in God was renewed. But discovering the wonderful nature of this region on the North Sea, simply having time to pray, enjoying spontaneous encounters with old friends or with people one had never seen before, spending leisure time by singing or playing games were also very important. Many relationships across nations, languages, and cultures were strengthened or newly established.

One of the highlights was certainly the outdoor worship service right on the beach of the North Sea. Not only Methodists from many different countries thought about «getting out of the boat and daring to walk on the water». Residents, tourists, and people just relaxing on the beach curiously joined the huge Methodist family in order to find out what was going on there. And not only a few of them were touched by the authentic and encouraging message they heard.

In almost all European countries, the Methodist Church, United or autonomous, is a small minority church. Therefore, such events are invaluable. Sandra Vanevska and Branka Naskovski from Serbia loved the music and how the leaders had prepared the worship services. «It is so touching to pray with one another and to worship Jesus together», they said. «We will take back home much joy – and the experience how we jointly celebrated Jesus in spite of different languages and cultures».

The Coptic Christians Emad Bhnan and Awatif Wesa, who originally came from Egypt and now live in Germany, underlined: «We feel very well here, and we enjoy the fellowship with so many Christians».

Bishop Sifredo Teixeira from Portugal is also convinced: «For our small Methodist Churches in Europe, such a festival is an important experience. We can see and feel that we are part of a much bigger family. We could never organize



such an event by ourselves, but to participate in it is a wonderful experience for us». And he added: «To see and experience how people help each other and care for each other is truly a blessing».

Jeff Campbell from Discipleship Ministries of The United Methodist Church in the USA was also inspired by the festival: «It is a great experience for me to have conversations with so many different people from all over Europe and to learn from the diversity of the various life situations». He said that one of his aims was to learn from European Methodists, who, in many regions, live in a very secularized environment. «We can see in the USA that an increasing number of people has no experiences with church, either. I want to learn and look out for models and creative ideas how Methodist congregations in Europe serve their secularized neighbors».

In the meantime, the participants have returned to their respective home countries. They are encouraged to put love into action and to share the Good News with their neighbors. And, yes, they also hope that it won't take another six years until they will meet again their European Brothers and Sisters.

## The Differing Worlds of Israel/Palestine



Rabbi Raanan and other Jewish participants in 'Praying Together' (Photo credit: MLOJ)

By John Howard  
Mission Partner, Methodist Liaison Office Jerusalem

Lying in bed at night, I frequently hear the sounds of stun grenades, tear gas or even live fire. The Aida Refugee Camp, where more tear gas is used than anywhere else in the world, is half a mile from my apartment. My walk from home to the office takes me along the 'wall' past the famous Banksy graffiti and through Checkpoint 300: almost the only way for Palestinians now to get to Jerusalem.

Ministering in this highly divided situation, the Jerusalem Methodist Liaison Office spans the divides. I meet with Jewish rabbis, with Orthodox priests and with Muslim clerics. While many of my daily encounters are with the Christians of Bethlehem, I have the chance to talk to visitors about what it is to live here today. I preach in churches in Bethlehem, Jerusalem and Tiberias. I travel between communities: into Gaza and across checkpoints, into settle-

ments and returning to the Beit Jala community of Bethlehem, where I live.

One initiative the Liaison Office supports perhaps encapsulates much of the diversity in one monthly event. 'Praying Together' brings Muslims, Jews and Christians into the same space and enables us to pray alongside each other. Every last Thursday of the month, we meet at the Jaffa Gate and walk together to a location in the Old City of Jerusalem. As we walk, we talk; as we pray, we long for a land of peace and justice; as we leave, we return to very different worlds. It is at the same time both a privilege to live here in the land where Jesus walked, daily walking past places many in the world can only dream of ever visiting, and an experience that breaks my heart daily as I see the injustices of life in this place.

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## "Modern Miracles" for Korean Peninsula

Have you ever waited for a miracle? We remember and recognize this situation every Advent time, but often it is not felt deeply and personally. It is a very different thing to pray, and petition, and hope, and dream of a miraculous act breaking into our day-to-day world. For my entire life, I have prayed that my nation, my country, my homeland, my heritage, and family could know peace and reconciliation – and become a peaceful and productive partner with our global community. I am overwhelmed as I see this miracle unfold, and am reminded again of the power of prayer to reconcile, to heal, to unite, and to usher in a new beginning for a new creation.

The historic summit in Singapore this week brought the Chairman of the State Affairs Commission of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK), Kim Jong Un, together with United States President Donald Trump to



discuss the future, not only of these two countries, but of the whole Korean peninsula as well.

Four commitments were made that lay a foundation for lasting peace in Korea:

The United States and the DPRK commit to establish new US-DPRK relations in accordance with the desire of the peoples of the two countries for peace and prosperity. The United States and DPRK will join their efforts to build a lasting and stable peace regime on the Korean Peninsula. Reaffirming the April 27, 2018 Panmunjom Declaration, the DPRK commits to work toward complete denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula

The United States and the DPRK commit to recovering POW/MIA remains, including the immediate repatriation of those already identified.

These are amazing agreements that change almost everything in the relationship of these two countries, and they will make the healing between North and South Korea that much easier and more likely. This will bring a new spirit and a peaceful relationship to East Asia and the whole world. As with all new relationships – or existing relationships undergoing a period of grace and forgiveness – this is a fragile and delicate time. While the agreements may appear on their face to be simple, they are not easy. This is a time for fervent prayer, and to encourage our leaders to do

everything in their power to nurture and support a healthy relationship.

It is also an excellent opportunity for us as a denomination to offer our support to these efforts. I am prayerful that our Council of Bishops, our General Board of Global Ministries, and all the other agencies of The United Methodist Church will work together to provide opportunities to visit North and South Korea, and engage in whatever ways are most helpful to promote peace and harmony.

Peace is an essential aspect of the fruit of God's Holy Spirit. Where God is at work, where grace and hope and mercy and compassion become normal and expected, miracles happen. My brothers and sisters, this is nothing short of a miracle, and a testament to the unifying power of God. Pray with me for denuclearization, disarmament, cessation of violence, that by God's grace, peace and love may abound. Thanks be to God!

Grace and Peace,

Bishop Hee-Soo Jung

## Methodist Church announces new Director of Evangelism and Growth



The Revd Trey Hall has been announced as the Methodist Church's Director of Evangelism and Growth, a new position aimed at supporting the development of these vital areas in Church life.

The role is part of the Church's ongoing work to reaffirm its nature of mission, known as Our Calling, in response to the Statistics for Mission Report presented at the 2017 Methodist Conference.

Trey Hall is a Methodist pioneer, church planting strategist, and evangelist. Since 2000 he has established and led churches in the United Kingdom and the United States, served as Mission Advisor for the Birmingham District of the Methodist Church in Britain, and coached scores of practitioners renewing inherited forms of church or launching fresh expressions of church.

Mr Hall teaches and presents regularly on both sides of the Atlantic specialising in the innovative mission and ministry required to respond to the seismic cultural shifts of the 21st century. He is passionate about helping diverse Christian leaders discover and engage in authentic evangelism that reaches new people in new places, brings spiritual joy to those who practice it, and centers us all in God's love and power.

Trey commented: "I am humbled and excited to join a diverse team of leaders across the Connexion who are taking the bold step of reclaiming evangelism as a core dimension of our mission and identity.

"Whether we're renewing existing congregations or pioneering and planting new Christian communities, we're in it together as we learn to speak of God's goodness to new people in honest, personal, and culturally relevant ways."

Jude Levermore, Head of Discipleship and Ministries with the Connexional Team, commented: "I am delighted that Trey will be joining us. His enthusiasm and gifts will be a great asset to the Church and to the Connexion as we reshape ourselves and refocus our work on Our Calling to mission and growth."

## The Nazarene Church Elects New General Secretary

The Board of General Superintendents announced Tuesday that Gary Hartke was elected by the General Board to serve as the Church of the Nazarene's next general secretary.

Hartke will follow David Wilson, who has served as general secretary since 2007. Wilson previously announced his intentions to retire at the conclusion of the 96th Session of the General Board in February 2019.

"It has been a great honor and privilege to serve the church in this assignment for the past 11 years," Wilson said. "I am delighted with Dr. Hartke's election. He brings experience on the general level, particularly in his work with general conventions, which has helped prepare him for the work of the general secretary."

The director of Nazarene Youth International since 2000, Hartke has been responsible for coordinating and supervising youth ministry worldwide for the Church of the Nazarene. As of 2017, NYI reported a membership of 425,508.

"Dr. Hartke's election is a gift to the denomination," said Gustavo A. Crocker, chair of the Board of General Superintendents. "Throughout his years in ministry, he has given careful attention to the local and global needs of the church. Whether organizing some of the finest conventions and conferences or mobilizing local and regional leaders, Gary's main goal has been to empower the local church from a global perspective. The Board of General Superintendents congratulates the church on this important election."

Hartke has significant experience leading denominational events such as Third Wave, the General NYI Convention, and Nazarene Youth Conference (USA/Canada). He has also served on the General Assembly Program Committee since 2001 and chaired the General Assembly Exhibit Committee in 2013 and 2017.

Born in Cincinnati, Ohio, USA, Hartke was ordained in 1993. He served as an associate pastor in three Churches of the Nazarene: Dayton-Beavercreek Church (Beavercreek, Ohio), South Portland First Church (South Portland, Maine), and Chicago First Church (Lemont, Illinois).



Throughout those years, he also served as youth camp director, district NYI president, team NYI trainer, and district NYC coordinator. Additionally, Hartke served as the candidate coordinator in World Mission with the responsibility to discover, develop, and deploy missionaries for the Church of the Nazarene.

"It will be a great privilege to serve as the general secretary," Hartke said. "There is an African proverb that states 'if you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together.' I believe that captures the heart of the Church of the Nazarene as we unite globally to make Christlike disciples. I look forward to supporting our churches worldwide in the name of Jesus Christ. I want to be part of going far together."

Hartke earned a Bachelor of Arts degree from Mount Vernon Nazarene University, a master's in church management from Olivet Nazarene University, and a Doctor of Education in ethical leadership from Olivet.

He and his wife, Joy, reside in the Kansas City area.

"Please join me in prayer," Crocker said, "for Dr. Hartke and the church as together we move forward in our mission to make Christlike disciples in the nations."

## Parting message from UCA President Stuart McMillan

The 14th President of the Uniting Church in Australia Stuart McMillan has urged Church members to address the “unfinished business” of sovereignty and treaty for First Peoples in his final national message.

“I started my Presidency with the Yolŋu words Bala limurr royirr nŋorrangitjilil - ‘Let us return to the white ashes of the fire’,” said Mr McMillan.

“It was a call to reflect on the way all the people of God, First and Second Peoples have been sustained by the Holy Spirit in their own way.”

“I continue to invite Church members to consider what it would mean for the practices of our Church to honour First Peoples as sovereign in this land and what it means to stand with them in their pursuit of just terms treaties.

“The conversation continues and the movement for Treaty is stirring again as the ashes of my time are cooling.

“I pray that the Holy Spirit will rekindle the embers of the work done by both First and Second Peoples over the last three years so that we can together strive to achieve a more just church and nation.”

The theme Mr McMillan chose for his triennium as President was Hearts on Fire.

A proposal to the Fifteenth Assembly in July will ask the Uniting Church to affirm that the First Peoples of Australia, the Aboriginal and Islander Peoples, are sovereign peoples in this land.

Mr McMillan said it had been a joyful, challenging and inspiring three years as President.

“I thank God for the great blessing of serving the Church in this role,” he said.

In his message to coincide with the Uniting Church’s 41st Anniversary on 22 June, the President also honoured Church women and men who had stood together with First Peoples in their struggles for their rights, the UCA’s international church partners and emerging young leaders in the Uniting Church.

“The love of Christ shared in all these relationships, these fellowships of reconciliation, is life-giving.”

Quoting from Hebrews 10:24 Mr McMillan urged Uniting Church members to fellowship wherever they may be.

“Beloved, let us continue to ‘consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, but encouraging one another’.”

“In your place you are Church, you are called to be a fellowship of reconciliation to shine the love and light of Jesus in your communities. I have been deeply blessed to share with many of you the ways in which you have been led to do this.”





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## About the First Friday Letter

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