Dear Friends,

July started off with an inspiring Council Meeting in Seoul, Korea. I saw young people and adult workers from around the world descend on Johannesburg, for the Fourth Young People’s Convocation of the United Methodist Church (summary from Bishop Wenner), followed by a host of events dedicated to preserving the legacy of Nelson Mandela, South Africa’s greatest statesman and recipient of the World Methodist Peace Award. He would have turned 100 on July 18.

We pray that the recent elections in Zimbabwe, Mali, Togo, South Sudan, Pakistan, Mexico and Cambodia will usher a new dawn in all these countries.

During the past few weeks, we saw fires, floods, and heatwaves on three continents. Many cities in the Northern Hemisphere recorded temperatures. Is this the face of climate change and global warming? The Council conveys sincere condolences to people who lost loved ones in Mati, Greece, Carr, California and other areas affected by fires and floods. We pray God’s mercy and grace upon all affected.

On Friday, July 27 many of us witnessed a phenomenal event – the longest “blood moon” or total lunar eclipse this century. According to NASA, the moon spent nearly 4 hours in the Earth’s umbral shadow. Lunar eclipses have spurned many myths and legends. The Bible has a few references of the moon turning to blood (Joel 2:10, Ezekiel 32:7, Matt 24:29, Acts 2:20, Rev 6:14). It is sad that some fringe groups who equate normal astrological events with cataclysmic consequences. I often counsel that rather than looking to the sky for celestial signs of God’s judgment, let us root out injustice and care for God’s creation so that we live in harmony with nature and each other on earth, our only planetary home.

Other events that put our finger on the pulse and gives us a sense of the heartbeat of the Wesleyan Movements like Zimbabwe Churches March for peace, Reunification Prayer for the Korean Peninsula, and WesleyMen Korea becoming official. You will also learn about the passing of WM President Edith Loane, the BGS announcement of the new Sunday School and Discipleship Director and how two denominations explore their Methodist Connection. How a church day care feeds minds and bellies, Nazarene Generosity leads to Russian Resources, and CCA’s Ecumenical leadership development conferences also makes interesting reading in this edition of the FFL.

Grace and Peace

Ivan
The World Methodist Council is a worldwide association of Methodist, Wesleyan, and related Uniting and United Churches. It engages, empowers, and serves the member Churches by encouraging Methodist unity in witness, facilitating mission in the world, and fostering ecumenical and interreligious activities. It promotes obedience to the Great Commandment of Jesus Christ to love God and neighbor and to fulfill the Great Commission to make disciples through vibrant evangelism, a prophetic voice, cooperative programs, faithful worship, and mutual learning.

The Council operates in a five years circle. The first meeting in this circle took place after the 2016 World Methodist Conference in Houston, Texas, September 4-5, 2016. The meeting in Seoul was the second meeting in the 2016 to 2021 quinquennium, and was held July 12-15, 2018 in Korea.

Currently 80 Methodist, Wesleyan and United or Uniting Churches serving in 138 countries and representing over 80 million Methodists affiliates and members are part of the Council family.

Following is a summary of the actions and decisions at the 2018 Seoul meeting provided by Bishop Rosemarie Wenner of Germany, WMC Geneva Secretary.

1. Continued efforts to support of the Peace Process for the Korean Peninsula

Meeting in Kwanglim Methodist Church in Seoul, the delegates got aware of the high expectations for major progress in the peace process after the Inter-Korean Panmunjom Summit. At its meeting in Houston, USA, 2016 the WMC has established a Korean Methodist Church (KMC) – United Methodist Church (UMC) and World Methodist Council (WMC) Roundtable for Peace. The second meeting will take place November 9-11, 2018 in Atlanta, Georgia, USA.

In addition, the WMC decided to connect its work with the Ecumenical Forum for Korea (EFK) by sending WMC President JC Park to the EFK meetings.

At Sunday July 15, 2018 WMC delegates and Methodists of the Seoul congregations of the KMC met at 7 pm for a Peace Prayer at the Plaza “Hope” right before the KMC Head Office.

“Faith Working Through Love” was received

From 2013 to 2018 the WMC and the BWA engaged in a formal dialogue. The Report and a Study Guide were presented and received with gratitude.

The dialogue commission states: “While we have not come to full agreement in all issues in our dialogue, we do not consider points of difference to be insurmountable barriers to unity in mission and witness.” With regard to the different understandings of baptism it recommends that “Baptists and Methodists seek to find even more ways of encouraging their members to remember, reaffirm and rejoice in their own baptism regularly”.

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3. Review of Ecumenical partnerships and next steps

The WMC celebrated with the WCC the 70th anniversary and seeks to engage in the Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace. F.e. it affirmed the Arusha Call to Discipleship and the Resolution passed by the WCC Central Committee June 20, 2018 on Recent Events in Gaza and Jerusalem.

The current dialogue of the WMC with the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity has started in 2017, the anniversary year of 50 years continued dialogue. The newly formed dialogue commission, together with the Steering Committee of the World Methodist Council and other stakeholders of the Methodist Ecumenical Office in Rome, were received by Pope Francis October 17, 2017. Our gift to Pope Francis was the Spanish translation of the last Dialogue Report “A Call to Holiness”.

We engage in the ongoing work in reception of the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification in cooperation with the other four partners involved.

At the Seoul meeting the WMC agreed to intensify the work with the World Communion of Reformed Churches and the African Instituted Churches, starting dialogues that integrate concrete cooperation of partners.

4. Thursday in Black Campaign

“Thursdays in black” is not new to the World Methodist family. The World Federation of Methodist and Uniting Church Women has been participating in the initiative since many years. Nevertheless the WMC reaffirmed the importance of the Campaign and encourages its member churches to speak up against violence in all forms and namely violence against girls and women.

5. Consultation Process on Mission in New Areas and Diaspora Churches

Wesleyans and Methodists see themselves as a mission movement. The WMC member churches send missionaries from everywhere to everywhere. In the age of migration many Methodist people seek new homes in other then their home countries. Very often they build churches in the Diaspora, sometimes in areas where other member churches are present. The WMC decided to start a Consultation Process in order to listen and learn from the experiences, strengthen communication and cooperation and eventually draft a “covenant of mutual support”.

6. Resolution “Religious Law in Bulgaria”

Listening to the report of a delegate from Bulgaria, we learnt that changes in the religious law in Bulgaria have been introduced to the Bulgarian Parliament that would hinder the work of f.e. the United Methodist Church in Bulgaria, being an international church. Churches would no longer be allowed to receive foreign funding and foreigners would no longer be accepted to offer religious services in Bulgaria. The WMC asked the General Secretary to express the WMC’s concerns about the violation of the Bulgarian Constitution that states a separation of Church and State and the independence of all religious groups.

7. Youth and Young Adults Network

The WMC appreciated the lively work of its Youth and Young Adults Committee and approved concrete steps in achieving a better representation of youth and young adults in the WMC.

8. Water and Peace Seminar in Jordan, Palestine and Israel October 8-13, 2018

In cooperation with Eco Peace Middle East and the Methodist Jerusalem Office, the Interreligious Committee of the WMC organizes a pilgrimage to Jordan, Palestine and Israel. This journey is designed to be a pilgrimage exploring the religious significance of the River Jordan for the Abrahamic faiths. It will serve as a fact-finding mission to learn about the present state of ecological devastation of the sacred river and the eco-system that it sustains. It will also be a spiritual exercise requiring much listening and understanding, solidarity and compassion, for those who find themselves deprived of water.

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Summary - Council Meeting in Seoul, South Korea continued

9. 22th World Methodist Conference to be held in Gothenburg, Sweden August 18-21, 2021

The WMC approved the theme for the 22th World Methodist Conference: “On the Move” and received with great gratitude a report of the plan team. For the first time, the World Methodist Council and Conference will be hosted by a member church that is a Uniting Church, namely the Uniting Church Sweden.

10. Moving towards Consensus Model

Julia Kuhn Wallace from the United Methodist Church, USA and Terence Corkin from the Uniting Church in Australia led two training sessions for the introduction to a consensus based decision making process. Even though the decision whether to implement the process has to be made in future meetings, the WMC started to make use of the principles.

11. Migration, Racism, Poverty and Inequality

In this quinquennium we agreed to engaged in the topics migration, racism, poverty (namely through inequality and injustices). The Committees of the World Methodist Council took efforts to dig into the subjects; the Family Life Committee will cooperate with the WCC in the “Churches Commitment for Children”, the Theological Education Committee is working on “Theology of Migration” and the Social an International Affairs Committee reminded us of the interdependence between “global” and “local”, just to name few examples.

The work of the Council and its committees was nourished by inspiring worships designed by its Worship and Liturgy Committee under the leadership of Rev. Amelia Koh-Butler from Australia. The great hospitality of our Korean Methodist hosts enabled the officers and the delegates to achieve a lot in little time. The meeting was well prepared by General Secretary Ivan Abrahams, the staff in the Lake Junaluska Headquarter and the treasurer Kirby Hickey. President JC Park, South Korea and Vice President Gillian Kingston led the sessions with inspiration, grace and humor.

To God be the glory for this step in our journey as World Methodist Council.

President Jong Chun Park asks that we join in prayer:

“Dear People called Methodists, let’s join in the worldwide prayer for peace in Korea on August 12th 2018. ‘Behold, how good and pleasant it is for sisters and brothers to dwell together in unity!’ (Psalm 133:1)

President Jong Chun Park
Zimbabwe Churches March For Peace

By Chenayi Kumuterera
MAY 31, 2018 | HARARE, Zimbabwe (UMNS)

The Zimbabwe Council of Churches organized a march encouraging a united, peaceful, just and prosperous Zimbabwe. Organizers of the march hope to increase understanding and awareness of the church’s role in the secular community with a focus on peaceful elections.

The four districts within the United Methodist Zimbabwe Episcopal Area and other members of the Zimbabwe Council of Churches celebrated Africa Day — May 25 — with a peace march, a public lecture and songs and prayers at the Harare Gardens.

Hundreds of United Methodists and members of other denominations gathered at the Town House in Harare. Escorted by the state police force, participants marched along Julius Nyerere Road to the Harare Gardens. They waved placards that advocated unity and prayed for a peaceful outcome in Zimbabwe’s upcoming elections.

Zimbabwe is scheduled to hold elections in July and for the first time in 16 years, the European Union will oversee those elections. The elections will be first since longtime President Robert Mugabe was ousted in November 2017.

Rugare Kozanai, assistant for governance, policy and research for the Zimbabwe Council of Churches, noted that the peace march complemented the “culture of peaceful initiatives” that preceded his involvement in the council.

United Methodists join members of other denominations in a march for peace, unity and prayer in Harare, Zimbabwe, before upcoming elections in July. Photo by Tapiwa Dzuda, UMNS.

The Rev. Kenneth Mtata leads the council’s secretariat. He asked church members to love one another in peace and to thrive on peace throughout the election process. “Every member,” he said, “has to preserve the peace we preach and experience the peace.”

Peace marchers prayed on the roads that lead to the parliament. “The economic decisions,” Mtata said, “must bring peace to Zimbabwe and to the High Court to enforce justice and give way to peace.”

Calling the peace march “a worthy cause,” the Rev John Makaniko, grassroots organizer for social justice ministry for the Board of Church and Society in Zimbabwe, said, “The message was clear for everyone across political divide [to] shun violence and embrace peace.”

He said John Wesley’s three simple rules – do good, do no harm and stay in love with God – have the power to change the world.

Retired Justice Sello Nare, speaking on behalf of the National Peace Reconciliation Commission, said, “Peace begins with me … with you and … with us all.

“Our action in peace [must] be active,” he continued. “The church must bridge the gap for social healing. We are all ambassadors of peace.”

Speaking at St. Timothy Mabvuku United Methodist Church, Onias Munamati said the role of the church during elections is to “pray, educate [about] the importance of peace, seek knowledge, demonstrate peace steadily and advocate for right policies.

“We have Christians within political circles, as elections can be a cause to unite – not to bring division and violence.” He urged the church to identify with Christ and to be transformed.

“Churches should never be silent,” said Mtata, but should preach a gospel of peace and unity and transform society.

Caroline Nyorowai Mutsago, an advocacy and grassroots organizer for Church and Society in Zimbabwe, agreed.

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Zimbabwe Churches March For Peace continued

“The church is well positioned to influence and teach about peace in our communities,” Mutsago said. “Church leaders are well respected. Using their position to our advantage will help in changing attitudes, character [and] behaviors and influence peace in communities.”

She reiterated the importance of social media, especially for youth who are easily pressured to perpetrate violence. Mutsago believes social media may help to reduce violence, especially during elections.

CCA’s Month-Long Ecumenical Leadership Development Training Commences

The month-long ecumenical formation and leadership development training course, Asian Ecumenical Institute (AEI) 2018, organised by the Christian Conference of Asia (CCA) was inaugurated on Monday, 16 July 2018 at the CCA headquarters in Chiang Mai, Thailand.

The AEI is aimed at training prospective church and ecumenical leaders in Asia. The theme of AEI-2018 is ‘Wider Ecumenism in Asia’s Pluralistic Context’.

The contents of the course include four main components: analyses of situations, sharing of ecumenical vision, understanding Asia’s pluralistic contexts, leadership development and community building. These would help participants to imbibe the spirit of wider ecumenism.

The outdoor study sessions include visits to refugee camps on the Thailand – Myanmar border, meetings and interactions with the refugees and stateless people, visits to Buddhist monasteries and dialogue with Buddhist monks on faith in the context of religious plurality.

Internationally acclaimed ecumenists, theologians, academics and social scientists who serve on the faculty of AEI-2018 include Dr. Wesley S. Ariarajah, Emeritus Professor of Drew University in the USA who served on the staff of the World Council of Churches as Deputy General Secretary and Director of Inter-religious Dialogue (Sri Lanka/Switzerland); Bishop Reuel Norman Marigza, formerly a professor at the Union Theological Seminary and the General Secretary of the United Church of Christ – UCCP (Philippines); Bishop Dr. Daniel Thiagarajah, CSI Jaffna Diocese and a New Testament Scholar (Sri Lanka); Dr. Joseph Deva Komar, Theological Seminary in Kuala Lumpur (Malaysia); Rev. Dr. Pradit Takerngrangsrarit, formerly the President and the Dean of the McGillivray College of Divinity of Payap University in Chiang Mai (Thailand); Dr. Le Ngoc Bich Ly of the Institute of Religion and Culture in Thailand (Vietnam); Venerable Dr. Phramaha Boonchuy Doojai of the Suanduk Temple and Mahachulalokkornrajavidyalaya University; and Dr. John Suresh, a Development Analyst and Civil Society activity (India).

The in-house members of the teaching faculty of AEI include Dr. Mathews George Chunakara, General Secretary of the CCA and programme staff of CCA – Dr. Chuleepran Srisoontorn, Rev. Jung Eun Moon, Dr. Reynaldo Racaza Ty, Rev. Dr. Ngur Liana and Dr. Ronald Lalthanmawia.

Twenty-five young people from various Asian countries and also from Mauritius, an island country in Africa are attending the AEI. The participants are sponsored by CCA member churches as well as by the Roman Catholic and Pentecostal churches.

The Asian Ecumenical Institute will conclude its sessions on 15 August.

The World Council of Churches invites all the member churches to observe a Sunday of Prayer for the Peaceful Reunification of the Korean Peninsula on 12 August.

Each year, Christians are invited to join in a prayer for peace and reunification of the Korean Peninsula. Prepared by the National Council of Churches in Korea (NCCK) and the Korean Christian Federation (KCF), the prayer is traditionally used on the Sunday before 15 August every year.

The 15th of August, celebrated as Liberation Day in both North and South Korea, marks the date in 1945 when Korea won independence from Japanese colonial oppression, yet ironically it also was the day when the peninsula was divided into two countries.

The Korean Christian Federation Central Committee (North Korea) and the National Council of Churches in Korea (South Korea) have composed their annual joint prayer for peaceful reunification of the Korean peninsula for 2018. The World Council of Churches is inviting its fellowship and all people of goodwill to use the prayer during worship, especially on 12 August, the weekend before August 15th, the anniversary of Korea’s liberation and division.

Churches are encouraged to translate this prayer into their national languages and share it with their congregations.


WesleyMen Korea Becomes Official

Posted by: Senior Admin Tags: Dr. Yoo, leadership, Seoul, WesleyMen Korea July 16th

With leadership from the Korean Methodist Men, fourteen officers were selected and more than seventy charter members of WesleyMen Korea were nominated and installed during the World Methodist Council meetings at Kwanglim Methodist Church on July 13, 2018. Each was honored with certificates and lapel pins identifying them as “WesleyMen.” As members of the global Methodist men’s affiliate, these men will be leaders in the global Methodist movement to end hunger. Dr. Jay Seung Yoo, serving as Vice President of WesleyMen for Asia and the Korea Peninsula was celebrated during morning worship on July 14th. It has been through the extensive efforts of Dr. Yoo and his General Secretary, Dr. James Choi, that WesleyMen Korea has officially begun. Dr. Choi will also serve as communications officer for WesleyMen Korea.

Following the inauguration of Dr. Yoo’s leadership, he shared, “Praise the Lord and believe we can do everything through him who gives us the power to end hunger on this earth!” The worship service included a sermon by WesleyMen World President Rev. Steve Hickle who preached from the gospel of John including Christ’s feeding of the multitude. Both of these installation opportunities for leaders took place during the meetings of World Methodist Council. The WesleyMen board and members are deeply grateful to the staff and leadership of the council for their support and willingness to share worship and meeting time to the Men’s Affiliate initiatives. Also, there is a deep gratitude for Kwanglim Church and its members who served as gracious hosts.

This story originally appeared on http://wesleymen.org/wesleymen-korea-becomes-official/
More than 330 United Methodist young adults gathered for five days of conversation, worship and fellowship at the fourth Global Young People’s Convocation. The delegates from 40 countries in four regions of the world came together for the leadership development event organized by Young People’s Ministries, a division of United Methodist Discipleship Ministries. The delegates discussed issues affecting young people and unity in the church.

Kakou Francois Moro, 29, of Côte d’Ivoire, said his group discussed politics and theology. “We looked at how the church can help implement democracy in countries holding national elections,” he said.

Another group discussed “Interfaith dialogue in the South African context” and agreed the call to love our neighbor includes those outside our faith.

Lily Majamaa, 27, of Nigeria said he learned The United Methodist Church offers resources for spiritual growth through discipleship and leadership development.

“This is my first time to attend GYPC. I really enjoyed the group discussions with people from all parts of the world. I made connections and will continue to communicate with my new friends after this event,” he said.

Arkansas Conference delegate, Miller Wilbourn, 22, was part of the workshop that discussed migration.

“We talked about how the way our Christian faith and our understanding of scripture informs the way we should act towards strangers in our countries, whether they are migrants looking for work or fleeing violence and other situations at home,” he said.

“We heard different stories from people who had to flee their homes and we discussed the political forces which cause global migration and how governments failed to adhere to United Nations guidelines on treatment of migrants.”

Anna Shipley, 18, attended the workshop on discerning the call to ministry. “We talked about different prayer practices and ways to listen before you try to move forward. I also participated in group discussions about feminism and women’s rights,” she said.

Deinah Lurpo Quire, 28, of Liberia, was interested in responding to the call to ministry. “I learned how to respond to a call, how to listen to the word of God and how to discern if God is speaking to you,” she said.

Quire, daughter of Liberian Bishop Samuel J. Quire Jr., said she received the call to ministry before her father was elected bishop.

“I still had to find my place — whether to go into discipleship or become an ordained minister. I finally got the opportunity to serve as a Global Mission Fellow, so I feel I am called to discipleship,” she said.

Tyler Smoot, the worship coordinator for the convocation, said the theme “United We Go” was selected by the worship team to highlight the work of the church in the world.

“The situation in the church is tense right now and we wanted to speak about uniting. For young people, it is important that the church does not simply exist, but it goes out serving in the world and mission,” he said.

“The planning team realized each of the words could be isolated and stand as a miniature theme. On the first and last day, we brought all the words together, but on other days we had worship focusing on single words.”

Smoot, an Alabama law student who is a volunteer on the event planning team, said the colors were chosen from the South African flag.

“The symbol is an artistic design of a tree. The concept was devised when we visited Constitution Hill in Johannesburg and learned that trees were community of meeting places. We were told in many African cultures, chiefs would gather under a tree to settle disputes or have conversations,” Smoot said.

“Indaba is Zulu, meaning gathering or conversation, so the venue — Indaba Hotel and Conference Centre — is an appropriate place for our global gathering.”

He said it is challenging to hold conversation in the church right now because there is a lot of tension about sexuality and the nature of the church and Bible interpretation.
Young People From 40 Countries Gather At Convocation continued

“The legislation at GYPC2018 is about conversation and trying to build relationships,” Smoot said.

Bishop Joaquina F. Nhanala, leader of the Mozambique Episcopal Area, which includes South Africa, said it is important for the church to be united.

“There is strength in unity and weakness in division. You are very important in the body of Christ because you were called by God,” the bishop said.

“If you want to move fast, move alone, but if you want to go far, you must move together. We want to go far as a church.”

Mighty Rasing, director of program development for Young People’s Ministries, said the convocation is an opportunity for young people to come together, build relationships and share their personal stories about engagement in the church.

“At GYPC2018, we have intentionally provided spaces for those conversations and for those stories to be shared. I am really excited about the stories that will be told and the ministries that will be celebrated and the connections and partnerships to be formed at this convocation,” Rasing said.

“We have come together as United Methodists from around the world to pray together, discern together and journey together.”

Chikwanah is a communicator of the Zimbabwe East Conference.

This story originally appeared on http://www.umc.org/resources/young-people-from-40-countries-gather-at-convocation

The Passing of Dr. Edith Loane

We give thanks today for the life of Dr Edith Loane who died on Monday morning 17th July. Edith was a former Britain and Ireland Area President 1976-81, World Treasurer 1981-86, and World President 1991-96. Since that time Edith continued to support the World Federation as a valued Senior Friend. We thank God for her commitment and faithful service over many years. Her legacy will live on in ordinary women reaching their potential in response to Edith’s encouragement. She knew Christ and made Him known. May she rest in peace.

The Vice President of the World Methodist Council, Gillian Kingston, writes:

Dr Edith Mary Loane, former President of the World Federation of Methodist and Uniting Church Women, died, after a period of illness, on Tuesday, July 17th.

Edith was born in Richhill, Co Armagh, on October 13th, 1926, the eldest daughter of the Revd Wesley McKinney and Mrs Alice McKinney. With her sisters, Joan and Kathleen, she experienced life as a daughter of the manse and early acquired that sense of Methodist connexion which was to inform her life both locally and at world Methodist level. The family moved to live in Co. Tipperary when Mr McKinney became the founder and first Principal of Gurteen Agricultural College.

Edith was educated at Methodist College, Belfast, and went on to The Queen’s University, Belfast, to study medicine. It was there that she met a young agricultural student, Oscar Loane. She was later to introduce him to her father and Oscar joined the staff of Gurteen. The rest, as they say, is history: Edith enjoyed the position not only of daughter of the first Principal, but that of wife of the third Principal, of the College.

Oscar and Edith rejoiced in their daughters and son, Barbara, Geoffrey, Ruth and Karen, and later, in their ten grandchildren, Jonathan and Sara, Ciaran, Kevin and Meskerim, Eoin and Grainne, Niall, Caoimhe and Dearbhail.

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The Passing of Dr. Edith Loane continued

Edith was as active in the Methodist Church in Ireland as she was in the World Federation of Methodist and Uniting Church Women. An active member of the church’s Council on Social Responsibility, she was the co-editor of a valuable manual on the pastoral care of those affected by suicide.

As a member of the Council for the Status of Women, she represented the women of the Methodist Church with élan and enthusiasm. Much more could be said - and was said - at the services of celebration of her life in Dublin and in Carlow on Friday, July 20th. In Dublin, the Vice President of the World Methodist Council, Gillian Kingston, recalled Edith as ‘a great encourager’ and one whose Christian faith had upheld her. In Carlow, family friend and colleague, the Revd Dr Brian Fletcher, noted that ‘in Edith we saw the hand of God weaving together her family and church life.’

She is now in the closer presence of the God who sustained her and whom she sought to serve through all the opportunities a rich life afforded.

BGS Announces New Sunday School & Discipleship Director

By Board of General Superintendents
16 July 2018

The Board of General Superintendents, Church of the Nazarene, is pleased to announce the election of Scott Rainey as global director of Sunday School and Discipleship Ministries International (SDMI), effective 1 August 2018.

Rainey currently serves as field strategy coordinator for the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) Field on the Eurasia Region. He and his family will relocate to the Kansas City area in the U.S. Rainey replaces Woodie Stevens, who served as global SDMI director from 2006 to 2018.

Rainey is a graduate of Olivet Nazarene University, Nazarene Theological Seminary, and Houston Graduate School of Theology, where he earned a Doctor of Ministry degree with an emphasis in church dynamics.

As CIS field strategy coordinator, Rainey oversaw the work of the church in eight countries. He has helped bring unity to field leadership and implemented a vision and strategy that saw five new churches in five different countries in 2016. In the past three years, the church has also been present in two new former Soviet countries, Belarus and Georgia.

“We are blessed to have Dr. Scott Rainey as the new global SDMI director,” said Gustavo A. Crocker, BGS chair. “He has a proven record of mobilizing the church for evangelism and discipleship from a global perspective. Because of his cutting-edge ministry in the U.S., he understands the church in the post-Christian West, while his experience as a missionary gives him a unique ability to work in diverse contexts. The Board of General Superintendents is pleased with Dr. Rainey’s election.”

Rainey is appointed strategy coordinator for the field in 2014.

“It has been a joy for our family to live and serve Jesus with the wonderful people of the Commonwealth of Independent States for the last six years,” Rainey said. “They have loved us, been patient with us, and taught us so much. I am thankful for God’s call, and humbled by the church’s confidence, to now serve as the global director of SDMI. I am excited and challenged by the enormous task of helping every child, youth, and adult in the Church of the Nazarene participate in their God-given responsibility to make disciples who make disciples! After all, our church exists ‘to make Christlike disciples in the nations!’”

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How A Church Day Care Feeds Bellies, Minds

Story by Heather Hahn, photos by Mike DuBose
July 23, 2018 | DABOU DISTRICT, Côte d’Ivoire (UMNS)

Every time you go to the grocery store, you likely see a bit of Côte d’Ivoire.

The country is the world’s largest producer of cocoa — supplying 30 percent of the beans that satisfy global chocolate cravings. It’s also a leading producer of coffee, cashew nuts, melons, bananas and palm oil.

Such fruitfulness makes it all the more troubling that any Ivorian should lack enough to eat, said United Methodist Bishop Benjamin Boni.

A church day care program is one way the Côte d’Ivoire Conference, which Boni leads, is working to ease the nation’s hunger pangs.

In a nation where rural areas rarely have access to preschool, this United Methodist-run pilot project in the village of Youhoulil is educating young minds as well as filling bellies.

Church leaders hope the project is just the beginning. The conference has made food security a focus for this year.

“This country is so blessed,” Boni said through an interpreter. “There are no dry areas where you cannot plant.”

Yet, there are areas where people do go hungry. According to the humanitarian organization World Food Programme, 7 percent of the country’s babies and young children suffer from malnutrition. More than 5.4 million Ivorians — 23 percent of the population — live below the international poverty line (defined as U.S. $1.25 a day).

“Christ Jesus told his disciples that they should give food to the people,” Boni said. “We understand through this Scripture that the physical welfare of people is as important as their spiritual welfare.”

In Youhoulil, located in the denomination’s Dabou District, United Methodist women noticed many of the children were undernourished.

This happened despite the fact that most of the village’s adults are farmers who cultivate cassava — a tuber that is a staple of west African diets much as potatoes are in the U.S.

Cassava is the main ingredient in the popular Ivorian side dish Attiéké, but it doesn’t contain much in the way of protein. As 1980s cereal commercials would say, cassava can only be part of a complete breakfast.

The United Methodist Women’s organization in the Dabou District started the Bethlehem Day Care in this farming community in 2016.

The goal is to teach the youngsters the basics of reading, math, history and the Christian faith. The women also want to make sure 2- to 5-year-olds have at least two balanced meals a day.

This academic year, the school has grown from 94 to 107 children. The school has six teachers.

On a muggy Wednesday morning, the 4- and 5-year-olds sat bunched up on the floor excitedly reviewing the difference between up and down and between front and back.

Little brightly colored handprints decorate their classroom — one of only two in the small, brick school building.
How A Church Day Care Feeds Bellies, Minds continued

The day begins with prayer at 8 a.m. followed by a breakfast of porridge, and then lessons. The youngsters break for lunch at noon, which is typically rice and beans or a hearty soup. Then it’s naptime followed by more lessons. The school day ends at 4 p.m., with the children usually sent off with a snack they can take home.

Parents pay the day care center 100 XOF, or roughly 18 U.S. cents, a day for the school. But it wouldn’t happen without the wider church’s support.

“Our plan is to build a better facility to accommodate more children,” said Djambi Gnandué Béatrice, the chair of the women’s organization. She pointed to bricks neatly stacked near the school’s entrance that are ready to be used in the expansion.

“Our dream is to see this repeated in all villages.”

Francine Mpanga Mufuk, a United Methodist missionary who works with women’s ministries across Côte d’Ivoire, sees in the Bethlehem Day Care an example of Christ’s miracles.

Initially, the women’s main worry was that there would not be enough food for all the youngsters, she said. The day the nursery school opened, many of the kids’ elder brothers and sisters also came wanting something to eat. There was far more demand than the women anticipated.

But church members stepped up. One person donated a bag of rice. Another gave a bottle of oil. The gifts continued and soon the women’s larders were full.

“At the end of the month, we discovered we have enough food to give to the kids,” Mpanga Mufuk said. “It’s like the way Jesus multiplied the food. That’s the story of the school in Dabou.”

Nazarene Generosity Leads to Key Resources in Russian

Moscow, Russia
By NCN News Staff | 13 July 2018

Until only a couple of years ago, there were no Wesleyan academic commentaries available in the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), a confederation of 15 Eurasian countries part of the former Soviet Union.

Now, thanks to the generosity of retired school teacher Chloe Schweitzer and the multitudes of people who donate to the Church of the Nazarene’s World Evangelism Fund (WEF), there are nearly 15 of the New Beacon Bible Commentaries translated into Russian — the most common language in the CIS.

In 2006, Schweitzer was a volunteer teaching English in Moscow, Russia. Schweitzer and her siblings decided they wanted to sponsor the translation of a book into Russian in memory of her parents, who were retired Nazarene ministers. The book they sponsored was The Story of God by Michael Lodahl and was published in Russian that year.

Shortly after this, Schweitzer returned home to the U.S. due to health issues, eventually passing away the following year. Before her passing, she donated a portion of her estate to the development of a much larger translation project than the previous one.

It wasn’t hard to see that the Russian-speaking world of the former Soviet Union, known as the CIS Field, needed Wesleyan commentaries, particularly for the Old Testament. To fill that gap, Schweitzer and the Church of the Nazarene’s CIS Literature Committee decided to use her donation to translate the New Beacon Bible Commentaries.

The Schweitzer family needed to sell her home to receive the money to donate to the project, but due to the U.S. recession during that time, it took nearly 10 years after she passed to do so. In the meantime, the church partnered with local Christian publisher Bible for Everyone and translation moved forward in 2010 with WEF funding the project.

In 2016, the Schweitzer home was sold, and by this time there

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Nazarene Generosity Leads to Key Resources in Russian continued

were already 11 commentaries translated. Since then, her donation has been used to sponsor the translation of three more commentaries with up to four more planned if all goes well.

Church of the Nazarene Global Missions Director Verne Ward recently presented the commentaries to General Superintendent Carla Sunberg, who served as a pioneer missionary in the CIS Field for many years.

“Chloe Schweitzer loved the church in the former Soviet Union and gave generously of herself as a volunteer,” Sunberg said. “Now, her legacy will live on in the lives of our pastors and leaders across the CIS Field.

My life is richer because I have known her, and this investment in such an outstanding commentary series will make a difference for years to come.”

The resources are expected to benefit hundreds of ministers, students, and laity across the field.

“Thanks to the generosity of the Schweitzer family, Nazarenes around the world, and the excellent work of our literature team,” Ward said, “these commentaries will have an incredible impact as we continue to develop leaders in our churches across the CIS Field to better equip them for ministry and going where the church is not yet.”

This story originally appeared on http://www.nazarene.org/article/nazarene-generosity-leads-key-resources-russian

Two Denominations Explore Methodist Connection

By Linda Bloom
July 24, 2018 | UMNS

Representatives of The United Methodist Church and Methodist Church in Britain will gather Aug. 11-12, at Methodist Central Hall, Westminster, in London to mark the 50th anniversary of a concordat agreement between the two denominations. The historic hall, which opened in 1912, sits across from Westminster Abbey. 2017 file photo by Mike DuBose, UMNS.

For a brief period in the 1960s, Methodists in the U.S. and in Great Britain considered becoming one body.

But the competing attentions of other possible merger partners in their own countries put that idea on hold.

Instead, a different kind of agreement, called a concordat, was finalized in 1968. And in a year of noteworthy anniversaries, a small gathering of United Methodists and British Methodists in London will celebrate their relationship and discuss future collaboration.

United Methodists traveling to England for the Aug. 10-12 event include 28 bishops, clergy and laity serving as official delegates and seven top agency executives, along with the secretary of General Conference, who are invited guests with voice but no vote.

The idea is to “dream some bigger dreams for the future,” said Doug Swanney, connectional secretary for the Methodist Church in Britain.

“If we’re all engaging in the same kind of mission … there must be crossing points where we can work better together,” he told United Methodist News Service.

On a regional level, Methodist and Wesleyan churches in Europe, including United Methodists, have a close relationship, Swanney said.

Both denominations — and the world — have seen major changes over the past 50 years. Bishop B. Michael Watson, ecumenical officer for The United Methodist Church, pointed out that “a new discussion is needed so that we can reshape our partnership in light of these new global realities.

“In fact, we should have already had this discussion,” he added.

Very few documents from the joint commission of the British church and the Methodist Church in the U.S. between 1965 and 1968 are available for research, noted the Rev. Robert Williams, the retired top executive of the United Methodist Commission on Archives and History.

That time period was the “high tide of ecumenism,” he said, and church leaders were thinking they could be stronger by being in ministry together rather than separately.

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“Unfortunately, we don’t have the minutes or the records of the joint commission,” explained Williams, who will make a historical presentation during the London gathering. “I think that’s a great loss.”

He attributes that “lack of documentary evidence” and a lessening of interest in a union to what was happening at the time in their respective countries.

Methodists in America were negotiating a union with the Evangelical United Brethren Church and, as a condition of that merger, dismantling its racially-segregated Central Jurisdiction. In ecumenical circles, the Consultation on Church Union was demanding attention. Across the pond, British Methodists had become more serious about talks with the Church of England.

In the end, the most significant part of the concordat was sending full credentialed representatives to each other’s highest governing assemblies, a natural development out of what had been a longstanding informal tradition dating back a century and a half, Williams said.

Currently, the British church sends four official, voting delegates to the United Methodist General Conference, which meets every four years, and United Methodists send two delegates to the annual British Methodist Conference.

Other programs grew out of the concordat. To Swanney, one of the most successful was the British-American Ministerial Program, which ran for about 10 years. “We had to stop it because we couldn’t get visas,” he said.

The concordat agreement has ensured a meaningful connection between what is now the global United Methodist Church and British Methodists, said the Rev. Alfred Day III, the current top executive of the Commission on Archives and History.

Day, who will be in London, views the August celebration as “another opportunity to remember some seeds that were planted” in 1968. “I think the time is right and the climate is right.”

In an era when television programs and organizations like ancestry.com focus on finding family roots, “my sense is that if we can help people to find their way to their faith and denominational roots there may be some powerful and incredible experiences there as well,” he said.

Day also applauded the investment that British Methodists have made in telling the story of John and Charles Wesley and their commitment to the idea that “heritage is a mission opportunity.”

With financial assistance from Britain’s Heritage Lottery Funding, Day added, the New Room in Bristol, England, has been transformed from a sleepy historical site to “the greatest educational experience in one building of the story of Methodism.”

Swanney hopes the August discussions will allow time to name some of the significant issues to consider as the two Methodist bodies look to the future, including engagement through the World Methodist Council and regional Methodist groups.

While “the headline” of the concordat focused on representation at conference, he said, the joint commission’s report also was an effort to find ways to cooperate in mission and ministry, as well as avoid duplication.

“We made some commitments in that concordat in recognizing the places that one tradition was already working,” he said, but also noted “a real sense of proactive hopefulness of what we might do together.”

Presentations on joint ministries will touch on work in social justice, global missions and ecumenical interaction.

Watson, the United Methodist ecumenical officer, expects the discussions to venture beyond Methodism to the present-day Anglican-Methodist discussions taking place simultaneously on two continents. The Methodist Church in Britain is considering a new covenant with the Church of England, and The United Methodist Church is nearing a full-communion agreement with The Episcopal Church in the U.S.

Increased understanding among Methodists across the global is important, Watson said. “This is a time of re-visioning for both of our churches, and we need to share these new visions with each other,” he pointed out. “The only way we can understand each other is to talk together honestly.”

Bloom is the assistant news editor for United Methodist News Service and is based in New York.
Nazarene’s respond after tropical storm hits Dominican Republic

Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic
By Church of the Nazarene Mesoamerica
19 July 2018

Tropical Storm Beryl swept through the Dominican Republic 10 July with strong winds and torrential rains.

The storm affected many areas, including greater Santo Domingo, where floods forced people from their homes. Significant damage was also done to the country’s infrastructure and thousands lost their possessions. The Emergency Operations Center estimates the number of affected homes at more than 1,500 and the displaced around 8,000.

The Church of the Nazarene responded through Nazarene Compassionate Ministries and disaster response teams, showing God’s love to communities in need. Volunteers traveled from several different areas to come together to serve at least 70 families. They carried enough food to last a week, as well as hygiene kits, clothes, and bedding (mattress and boxes), among other supplies. As part of a joint effort, local pastors and response teams delivered supplies by going house to house in Las Palmas de Alma Rosa, Boca Chica, El Café de Herrera, and Haina.

“In every community and [with] every family, we pray, we praise God, and we thank Him in the middle of this situation, recognizing His compassion and love,” said Paquita Bido, NCM national coordinator. “Several testimonies confirmed the importance of bringing practical love to the needy, just as Jesus would have done so.”

Storm victims expressed their gratitude for assistance in their time of need.

“Thank you, God,” Martina said after a bed was delivered to her family. “Finally, tonight we will be able to sleep in the house.”

Her family was sleeping in neighbors’ homes after they lost their home and belongings.

“May God bless the donors and the Church of the Nazarene for thinking of us,” said July, who was tearful as she was also given a bed.

Volunteers met the mother of a rescued 2-month-old girl, pulled from flood waters. The happy mother received a bag of food, which was needed as she had nothing left in her house due to storm damage.

Nazarene teams also provided assistance to members of the Church of the Nazarene of Boca Chica, Cristo la Roca, and the surrounding community. All felt blessed to receive and provide help in a time of need.

Prayer is requested for the victims of Tropical Storm Beryl and for those continuing to provide disaster relief.

--Church of the Nazarene Mesoamerica
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