



FIRST FRIDAY LETTER

The World Methodist Council April 2019

Greetings from the General Secretary

Greetings in the name of our Crucified and Risen Lord, Jesus Christ!

After an exhausting March schedule which included the launch of the African Methodist Council in Nairobi, Kenya, my youngest son's wedding on a cruise to the Portuguese Islands, meetings in Britain and Sweden, I was able to catch my breath at a Global Leadership retreat on Robben Island, South Africa (www.robben-island.org.za).

Until the dawn of democracy in South Africa, Robben Island was a place of banishment for prisoners of the conscience. Two prisoners Stanley Magoba (1996) and Nelson Mandela (2000) received the prestigious World Methodist Peace Award. The Global Leadership retreat traced the steps of these and other giants of the apartheid struggle. More importantly, we wrote the forgotten David Stuurman a Khoisan chief (he resisted Dutch and British colonial rule and was imprisoned on the island from where he escaped twice before being banished to Australia), back into history with ceremonies focused on centering, recalibrating and restoring our leadership.

As we celebrated and commemorated the life and witness of David Stuurman on Robben Island, during Eastertide Christians from around the world will commemorate the death and resurrection of Jesus. The resurrection of Jesus is a testimony to the power of God's love. In William Shakespeare's Hamlet; death is described as, "The road from which no traveler has ever returned." (Hamlet Act 3 Scene 1) He was wrong because we believe that one did return and his name is Jesus, the Christ. God moved the great stone that covered Jesus' grave, and will move the stones that stand in our way to live a full and productive life.

In this edition of the First Friday Letter you will read about the Notre Dame Consultation, the Wesley Easter Mission, the World Federation of Methodist and Uniting Church Women meeting in Hong Kong to decide the theme of the 2021 Assembly, and an update on the first African American Methodist Conference. Other stories you may find interesting are how a Chuuk church responded to the needs of other islands and how a church empowers rural women in Zimbabwe.

May you this Easter have a fresh encounter with the Living Lord, Jesus Christ and boldly proclaim, "The Lord is risen! He is risen indeed." Let us lay hold to this certainty and make a difference in the world that God so loves.

Shalom
Ivan



Notre Dame Consultation

The Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification (JDDJ) met from March 26-28 at the University of Notre Dame. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss implications of that landmark agreement in the context of growing closeness and collaboration between these groups. Included were church leaders from the Roman Catholic Church, the Lutheran World Federation, the World Methodist Council, the World Communion of Reformed Churches, and the Anglican Communion.

The meeting opened with an ecumenical evening prayer service led by local clergy and members of the Notre Dame community there in Indiana. The event concluded with a public panel entitled “From Conflict to Communion: The Future of Christians Together in the World.”

Participants at the consultation recognized the urgency of presenting afresh the core message of the JDDJ that “by grace alone, in faith in Christ’s saving work and not because of any merit on our part, we are accepted by God and receive the Holy Spirit, who renews our hearts while equipping and calling us to good works.” They stressed the relevance of this gospel message for our conflicted and wounded world.

The representatives discerned further steps on the journey toward deeper ecclesial communion and a more visible common witness. Challenged with showing the deeper bonds that have been developing over the past two decades, the group welcomed the 2016 “Lund Imperative” to act always from the perspective of unity rather than from the point of view of division. The participants also affirmed the method of differentiating consensus that allows for agreement on common convictions while maintaining different confessional expressions.

The purpose of the meeting was not to achieve theological breakthroughs, yet participants were able to discuss key issues of mutual recognition of ministry, highlighting ways of strengthening cooperation in pastoral ministry and social outreach. The group discussed the need for strategies to address

the connection between justification and justice, and proposed the production of a range of common resources such as catechetical tools. Together participants encouraged the strengthening of the common bond of baptism in ways appropriate to local contexts.

The participants recognized the need to apply the 1952 Lund Principle, which calls them to act together in all things except when significant differences of conviction compel them to act separately. To continue the conversation, the participants decided to set up a steering committee to carry forward their ongoing work.

The members of the Consultation expressed gratitude for the generous hospitality shown by the University of Notre Dame which enabled them to move forward together on their journey. It was their prayer that the Holy Spirit bring to completion what God has begun.

Click here for the Notre Dame Consultation Statement: <http://firstfridayletter.worldmethodistcouncil.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/JDDJ-ND-Final-Statement.pdf>



World Methodist Evangelism welcomes 2019 Order of the FLAME members

Last month World Methodist Evangelism hosted its 24th gathering of the Order of the FLAME (Faithful Leaders as Mission Evangelist)! It is always exciting when the Wesleyan Methodist family comes together and this year’s FLAME gathering was no exception. 125 new and existing members from the AME, AMEZ, CME, Free Methodist, Nazarene, UMC, and Wesleyan Churches in North America gathered at Epworth by the Sea on St. Simon’s Island, Georgia for encouragement, learning, and spiritual refreshment and nurture. We are grateful for the powerful ways the Holy Spirit was present with us and look forward to deepening the relationships that were created during our time together.

If you are a member of the Order of the FLAME, we encourage you to connect to the incoming class on the Order of the FLAME Facebook group as well as by confirming your contact information via the WME website. (<https://www.worldmethodist.org/engage/flame/connect/>)



Hope is Built on Nothing Less' a Certain Message for Uncertain Times



Wesley Mission in Sydney, Australia, has been deeply engaged in preparing for their annual Easter Mission. This year's period of mission engagement is inspired by the nineteenth century hymn by Edward Mote which has taken on a fresh focus in the contemporary music world with the outreach title 'Hope is built on nothing less' as the adopted theme.

This theme gave the setting of British Methodist Minister, serving as Superintendent of Wesley Mission, Rev Keith Garner's Easter message broadcast on television across the nation. He said, "Just as no Christian message is ever given in a vacuum, so this year's Easter message is delivered in the context of the recent Christchurch terrorist attack upon two mosques, which left 50 people dead and many more injured." He called for an end to racist rhetoric and all such language and actions which divide rather than unite people.

The week's activities include public witness at Circular Quay and Martin Place which both lie at the heart of Sydney. At a Holy Week Breakfast, Mr Garner will interview former Prime Minister of Australia, the Hon. John Howard AC, who served as Prime Minister from 1996 to 2007. Very early in his prime ministership, he led the nation to introduce much tighter gun controls following the Port Arthur massacre in April 1996 when 35 people were murdered in Tasmania. Mr Garner said, "It was a highly significant example of leadership at the time and appropriate to refer to today, following the positive contribution of Jacinda Ardern, the Prime Minister of nearby New Zealand."

The Easter Mission also takes place against the background of recent news which highlights the fact that the wealthiest and the poorest in the country live remarkably close to each other in Sydney. Mr Garner said, "This pattern is one that can be replicated not only around Australia, but across the world." Additionally, Wesley Mission will continue to challenge any expressions of racism as and when they occur, for they contradict the profound message of Christian love which is for all and spelled out clearly at Easter. Following a recent State election, the country is now preparing for a Federal election and these are issues that Wesley Mission will be seeking to raise in the public arena.

Wesley Mission exercises a growing range of over 150 services in the Australian community and identifies the growing sense of despair that defines so many cities around the world. Mr Garner said, "Lives are being destroyed by greed, and this is perpetuated by those who are unwilling to recognise the basis upon which our hope is built. Our Christian message has never been more needed than today."

Easter Day, as always, sees the climax of an important period of mission with the Easter Sunrise Service at the Sydney Opera House, broadcast live across Australia at 6am (local time). The service features music, interviews, preaching and special contributions by Sarah Roebuck, singer Ellen Malone and Soul Purpose, a Wesley Mission Tongan group.

In addition to the live broadcast in Australia on the Channel 9 Network, the service is being simulcast on radio stations around the country and a livestream available worldwide at wesleymission.org.au

Some of the key broadcast times to watch the livestream online are as follows:

Sydney, Australia	6am, Easter Sunday, 21 April
US East Coast	4pm, Saturday, 20 April
US West Coast	1pm, Saturday, 20 April
United Kingdom	9pm, Saturday, 20 April
Cape Town, SA	10pm, Saturday, 20 April
Apia, Samoa	9am, Easter Sunday, 21 April
New Zealand	8am, Easter Sunday, 21 April

WFMUCW Met in Hong Kong to Set the Theme for the 2021 World Assembly

The World Executive of the World Federation of Methodist and Uniting Church Women met in Hong Kong in March 2019. Each of the nine geographical Areas was represented by an Area Officer, sharing reports with the editor of the Tree of Life newsletter and all five World Officers. Dr Sandra Gadson was officially and joyfully welcomed as the new Area President for the North America Area. It was agreed that the theme for the 14th World Assembly 10-15 August 2021 will be 'Go and bear fruit; fruit that will last' (John 15:16). It will take place in Gothenburg at the same venue as the World Methodist Council event of the following week. This means that women who wish to attend both events are able to do so.

During our World Executive meeting, we prayed for those caught up in tragic events in New Zealand, Zimbabwe, Mozambique and Malawi, sending messages of support and condolence. We were also in touch with our representatives at the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women (CSW63) meeting at the same time in New York. Greetings were also sent to United Methodist Women Program Advisory Group meeting in Nashville and celebrating 150 years of mission, turning Faith, Hope and Love into Action.

During the last week of March, World Officers stay on in Hong Kong for the 11th East Asia Area Seminar, 'Here

I am. Send me!' (Isaiah 6:8). Those attending include women from Malaysia, Taiwan, Singapore, Philippines, Hong Kong, Cambodia, Korea and Indonesia.

More details of World Federation activities, including a monthly 'Call to Pray' are found on the website and Facebook pages. www.wfmucw.org

World Federation continues to support the Thursdays in Black campaign, as is clear from our group photo taken during our World Executive meeting.



Update on the 1st African Methodist Conference



About 250 delegates gathered from the 13th -17th March 2019 from all over Africa at the Methodist Resort and Conference Centre

To God be the glory for a very successful Conference of Methodists on the soil of Africa. It was an exciting and glorious gathering of Wesleyans from the Methodist Churches, United Methodist Churches, Free Methodist Church, Africa Methodist Episcopal Zion and other uniting bodies.

About 250 delegates gathered from the 13th -17th March

2019 from all over Africa at the Methodist Resort and Conference Centre, Venue of the great event.

The 1st Africa Methodist Conference had the pleasure of receiving papers on various topics such as

1. Africa Methodist Council, The Vision and The Journey So Far – Most Rev M. Kehinde Stephen, Interim Chairman AMC
2. The Wesleyan Movement, Shaping the future of Africa – Most Rev Dr Paul. K. Bofo – Presiding Bishop Methodist Church Ghana.
3. Political and Economic Stability of Africa, The need for a Methodist Response - Bishop Joseph Ntombura Christ for all.
4. The Wesleyan movement beyond boundaries and interfaith issues – Bishop Dr Sunday Onuoha (President, Vision Africa)

continued on next page

Update on the 1st African Methodist Conference contd.

The participants also had intensive group discussions on matters of Irregular migration, Child abuse, the role of men, women, youth and how we can bring theology into the public space especially through the social media.

In attendance we also had the General Secretary of the World Methodist Council Bishop Ivan Abrahams whose paper delivered at the East African and Southern Africa Summit about a year ago was featured prominently in the second edition of Africa Connect, our news bulletin. Africa Partnership coordinator of the Methodist Church Britain Dr Bunmi Olayisade and other ecumenical partners such as the General Secretary All Africa Council of Churches Rev Dr Fido Mwombeki commended the founding of the AMC and urged its participation in other ecumenical bodies.

The Conference which was chaired by the Most Rev M.Kehinde Stephen who had served the Africa Methodist Council as the Interim Chairman from 2015 saw to the ratification of the Constitution of AMC and also the following elected officers who will serve on the executive committee till the next General Conference in four years from now.

President

i. Rt. Rev. John Ntombura – Presiding Bishop, Methodist Church in Kenya

ii. Vice Presidents

a. Rev. Dr. Hounsa Kponjesu Amos – Presiding Bishop, Eglise Protestante Methodiste du Benin (Francophone Conferences West Africa)

b. Most Rev. Dr. Paul Bofo – Presiding Bishop, Methodist Church Ghana (Anglophone Conferences West Africa)

c. Bishop Jocqualine Nanhala - Bishop, United Methodist Churches, Southern Africa. (Southern Africa)

d. Bishop Samuel Kanyinamura - Presiding Bishop Free Methodist Church Rwanda. (Eastern Africa)

iii. Very Rev. Opeyemi Awe - **General Secretary**

iv. Rev. Kinsou T. L. Jose - **Coordinating Secretary for Justice, Development, Peace and Reconciliation**

v. Ms. Bongie Moyo-Bango - **Coordinating Secretary for Communications**

vi. Rev. Nicholas Nteere - **Coordinating Secretary for Mission and Evangelism**

vii. Very Rev. Prof Johnson Kwabera Asamoah-Gyadu - **Coordinating Secretary for Wesleyan Studies and Leadership Development**

viii. Very Rev. Anthony Kwamena Cobbah - **Honorary Treasurer.**

The Conference agreed to have the Headquarters of the Africa Methodist Council at Ghana at the Methodist Church Ghana Headquarters

Special appreciation was given to the Host, Methodist Church in Kenya through the Presiding Bishop, Rev Joseph Ntombura who by the grace of God was elected the President AMC. The entire conference was also full of appreciation for the good work done by the Interim Committee ably led by Most Rev Kehinde Stephen who just recently retired as the Methodist Archbishop of Ibadan, Nigeria and who had journeyed along with the formation of AMC Since 1986 when the idea of Africans meeting on the soil of Africa was raised at the same venue where the 1st Conference took place.

We look forward to the next General Conference in 4 years from now.

Massacre of Filipino farmers condemned

The World Methodist Council (WMC) condemns the recent news of the massacre of 14 farmers in the Philippines. The killings have been described as senseless and a degradation of human dignity.

“The waste of human blood of any kind is condemned,” said the Chair of Social and International Affairs, Archbishop Dr. Chibuzo Raphael Opoko. The WMC joins others in calling for the perpetrators of this crime to be brought to justice. The latest violence is reported to have occurred in the center of the nation’s sugar industry.

“The need to dwell in peace and justice cannot be over-emphasized,” the Archbishop adds. “We must all engage in works of peace, justice, and the promotion of human dignity.” The WMC prays that the twin virtues of peace and justice reign in the Philippines and for all people everywhere.

Chuuk Church Responds to Needs of Other Islands

Pastor Richard Sulatra recently gathered 18 Filipino church members and four Chuuk Church of the Nazarene members 10 February to serve in Fefan, a nearby island.

The Chuuk church members were inspired after returning from a short holiday to the island and shared a vision with their pastor to minister to Fefan communities.

The group teamed up with a Catholic church, which provided the boat and gasoline for the members to get to the island. Church members provided haircuts, massages, tested blood pressure and blood sugar, and reached out to children through storytelling.

Life on these remote islands is not always easy. Since the most common sources of income are farming and fishing, another trip is planned for the second week of April to teach the Fefan people the skills that the team offered them, allowing the community to have more varied sources of income. The church will also be collecting school supplies for the children on the island.

The outreach was well received by the local people. Word

has gotten out of their ministry, and the church members have been asked to visit other islands. The church in Chuuk hopes to grow this ministry by developing disciples and encouraging revival among the believers there. They want to invite non-believers and other organizations to join in the effort to meet the needs of these islands with a long-term goal to start new church plants throughout Micronesia.



This photo and article are from www.nazarene.com

Church Empowers Rural Women in Zimbabwe

Church-sponsored projects including beekeeping, small-scale farming and craft making are helping rural women in Zimbabwe survive the struggling economy.

The country's inflation rate hit a 10-year high in December, according to the statistical agency Zimstats. In January, the government more than doubled fuel prices, leading to violent protests and fuel and currency shortages.

As part of its strategic plan to empower rural communities in Zimbabwe, The United Methodist Church in the Mutasa-Nyanga District has encouraged its women's groups to empower members to start small capital projects to help keep their families going during difficult times.

The Odzani Swarm Charm, a beekeeping initiative, is one of the projects that is transforming the lives of women through the selling of honey. Twenty women form the group, with each member owning more than 15 beehives. Most of the women are United Methodists.

While members have their own beehives to manage, they sell the honey collectively. They also receive training together from the local agriculture extension officer.

Judith Chikono, project chairperson, said bee farming is a lucrative business that has not been fully tapped into by indigenous farmers, especially women in Zimbabwe. She said although honey is in demand on the market, its production is still low in the country.

While members receive about \$500 U.S. for selling 30 kilograms of honey quarterly on the local market, even more could be realized if the farmers had the money to venture into large-scale farming projects, Chikono said.

Other women in the district are seeing the benefits of small-scale farming projects, too.

Euriah Makwasha coordinates a farming venture on a one-hectare piece of land (about 2.5 acres) at the United Methodist Old Mutare Mission Center. She said they have more than 50 women producing cowpeas for the local market.

"We have been allocated a piece of land by Old Mutare Mission Centre, where women are growing cowpeas for feeding our families, while the surplus is sold at the local market," she said.

Cowpeas are an annual legume that tolerate heat, drought and humidity. The fresh, dried leaves can be used as relish on the table and the pea seeds can be eaten after harvest.

Makwasha said although generating income was the main objective when they started, they are now using the surplus to support their families, and the church also is benefiting from the plough-back initiative.

"As women into farming, we are not only producing for consumption, but the surplus from the proceeds is also directed to other church programs that require capital," she said.

Those programs include paying school fees for orphans and providing milk for infants.

She said the project has allowed the women's organization to supply funds to the church for various projects more quickly than it had in the past.

This article is from www.wmnews.org



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We Are On the Web

This and past First Friday Letters can be found online at FirstFridayLetter.worldmethodistcouncil.org.

The World Methodist Council's website may be found at worldmethodistcouncil.org.

The World Methodist Museum's website is at methodismuseum.org.

To subscribe to this newsletter, please email communications@worldmethodistcouncil.org.

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