



FIRST FRIDAY LETTER

The World Methodist Council August 2019

Greetings from the Rev. Sam Murillo

Dear brothers and sisters from our wide, diverse and rich Wesleyan / Methodist family, I greet you in the name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Just last Sunday according to the liturgical lectionary we pondered on the Lord's Prayer. How fortunate and needed are those Words from Jesus guiding us to return to Our Father, who art in heaven. Not the Father of some, or a few, the Father of us all as children, as loved and equal brothers and sisters.

It is relevant to reflect on this due to the very sad reality of media and political polarized ideologies which involves a constant "spectacle of division, fears, wars and inequalities that pervades our world, in the face of the depression and despair of so many young people".¹ Jean Vanier, founder of L'Arche, emphasized on his last writings: "encountering difference and working constantly to build bridges and not walls: this is the path of peace."²

This week, colorful pink seesaws were installed between the existing wall at the edge between Mexico and the US, so children from both sides of the border could encounter not as strangers, not as foreign, not as enemies, not forced to pick political or ideological sides but to play together.³ Maybe that's why Jesus greets children, welcome them and give them a place insisting that the Kingdom of God is theirs. Hallowed be Thy Name.

We cannot forget the exhortation from Pope Francis in 'Laudato Si' to realize that nothing in this world is indifferent to us and that we can overcome the throwaway culture by working together on the proposal of a new way of life⁴, which is full of hope and good news for everyone as beloved children of The Father.

The temptation to give up and despair might be quite strong as part of all the big challenges that our Christian communion face daily on each context, Thy Kingdom come we mourn together. But at the same time, we witness month after month how God is on the move around the world 'ad intra' and 'ad extra' our Wesleyan / Methodist family: from united communities in Rwanda to reopen churches together, to pilgrimages of justice and peace in Israel, Palestine and Fiji assuming our role as brothers and sisters to bear hope together. Thy Will be done, on earth as it is in Heaven we proclaim.

As part of this monthly greeting it's important to mention that at the end of August, WMC Steering Committee members will travel to Mexico City for our annual meeting. Our General Secretary, Bishop Ivan Abrahams made an outstanding visit at the beginning of 2019, experiencing local Methodist communities, encountering local leadership and ministering to those in pain because of violence. The Methodist Church of Mexico welcomes you all, through our presiding Bishop in the Annual Conference of Mexico (Revd. Dr. Moises Morales Granados) and myself as Youth and Young Adults President in the WMC, we are honored, supported and encouraged by all our fellow brothers and sisters that will come and be witness of the current challenges and reality of our country and society. Recognizing how The Father gives us this day and each day our daily bread. And forgives our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. Please, pray for safe travels and every decision to be made during this period of time.

Wesleyan / Methodist family, it's important to confirm together that a path to fellowship, peace and unity is possible despite cultural, religious, political and historical differences, while we all allow ourselves to continue being evangelized and receive from each other a share of wisdom and richness as the answer to our common prayer: lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. Let us be united by ceaseless prayer, confirming in our hearts the move of the Spirit and commit to our common call while we are strong in Christ!

For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory, forever. Amen

Yours,

Rev. Sam Murillo

¹ Jean Vanier (2018), A Cry is Heard: My Path to Peace. Longman and Todd Ltd: U.K., p. 6.

² Ibid., p. 6.

³ <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2019/jul/30/pink-seesaws-reach-across-divide-us-mexico-border>

⁴ Francis, Encyclical Letter Laudato Si (24 May 2015), 16, p. 6.

Final call for 2019 Peace Award Nominees

If you have been planning to nominate someone who exemplifies Courage, Creativity, and Consistency for the World Methodist Peace Award, you must act now.

Applications submitted by August 20 will be considered for this year. Any application received after August 20 will be reviewed later for 2020. Note, all supporting documents must be included.

The nominee should show courage in regard to physical danger or putting personal interest at risk. Creativity should include opening new initiatives and attracting others in working for the cause of peace, Consistency is judged by effort over a period of time and intensity, despite setbacks. Here is the link to read the full criteria:

<http://worldmethodistcouncil.org/whatwedo/world-methodist-peace-award/>

The recipient receives a medallion, citation and US \$1000 which is symbolic of the larger recognition achieved in working for peace, justice and reconciliation. The recipient is included in the World Methodist Council Peace award booklet and their photo is hung on the wall of the World Methodist Museum with other recipients of this prestigious award.

Go to www.worldmethodistcouncil.org and click on the “About the WM Peace Award” tab on the left side of the homepage and complete the online application. Please send all nomination forms to Bishop Ivan Abrahams at info@worldmethodistcouncil.org.

Hiroshima and Nagasaki remembered

On the 74th year since the terrible bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, all Methodists and people everywhere are urged to pray for world peace. August 6 and 9, 1945 changed the world forever. “We are in prayer for the victims and survivors of Hiroshima and Nagasaki,” said General Secretary Ivan Abrahams, “and we pray that peace will come to this broken world where nuclear weapons ceases to exist, rather than be proliferated, which remains a constant and serious threat. The problem of nuclear safety is of worldwide concern.”

The United Nations passed an historic treaty banning the use of nuclear weapons in July 2017, where 122 nations voted to approve the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. This was the first legally binding international agreement to comprehensively prohibit nuclear weapons, leading towards their total elimination. In 2005 on the 60th of the bombings, the Bishops of the United Methodist Church backed a complete ban on nuclear weapons and adopted a resolution. Many others have expressed a desire for nuclear weapons to cease to exist. Yet they continue, more than enough to wipe all life on the earth.



Link to the prayer by Rev. Nobu Hanaoka
<http://www.rethinkchurch.org/articles/spirituality/a-prayer-of-remembrance-for-hiroshima-and-nagasaki>

Each of us must do our part, and seek and champion peaceful coexistence for all peoples of the earth. All are made in God's image. So God created mankind in his own image in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. Genesis 1:27 NIV

Following is a link to a prayer by Rev. Nobu Hanaoka, a survivor of the atomic bombing of Nagasaki, Japan and a retired Methodist minister who lives in California. He was eight months old when the bomb fell, living with his family outside the city. Only six when his mother and sister died from the bombing results, he was not expected to live to adulthood.



By the Jaffa Gate, final showdown looms in battle over Jerusalem's historic hotel

Standing on a balcony at the New Imperial Hotel, overlooking Jaffa Gate in Jerusalem's Old City, 75-year-old Walid Dajani last week declared a one-man war on Jewish settlers.

Officials from Israel's supreme court had served an eviction notice against Dajani following a ruling last month that the disputed 2005 sale of the historic 40-room hotel to a radical settler group was valid. The Jewish settlers' organisation Ateret Cohanim immediately branded him "a squatter" and threatened to seize the building. Such a move would establish a strategically valuable settler presence just inside Jaffa Gate, the main entrance to the ancient city's Christian Quarter.

According to Dajani, the settlers – who seek to create a Jewish majority throughout the Old City which, along with East Jerusalem, was annexed by Israel in the Arab-Israeli war of 1967 – are enacting "the rape of Jaffa Gate". His family has owned land on nearby Mount Zion for 800 years, and has run the New Imperial since 1949. "From this moment I am embarking on the fight of my life," he said, calling on Christians, Muslims, Jews and world leaders to fall in behind him. "On my back, they will take me out."

So far his appeal for international support has been met mostly with silence. But earlier this month, local Christian leaders, terrified of the political and religious consequences of the settlers' takeover, demonstrated inside Jaffa Gate.

Archbishop Theodosius Attulah, spokesperson for the Greek Orthodox church, criticised the supreme court decision, saying the sale was fraudulent. "The Christian properties have been a target for 70 years, but this is the most dangerous so far. It is aimed at marginalising Palestinian influence and weakening the Christian presence in the Old City. It will not be tolerated.

"Jerusalem is sacred to the three monotheistic religions, the purpose of the move is to transform the city into a place of hatred and struggle," he said.

The showdown is the culmination of a lengthy court wrangle dating back to a suspect secret sale of Greek Orthodox-owned properties to settlers, authorised by a now deposed Greek Patriarchate. Three properties were involved: the New Imperial Hotel and the Petra Hotel, both in the Jaffa Gate plaza, and a house in the Muslim Quarter.

The Greek Orthodox church, the largest private landowner in Israel and the occupied territories, has often sold property in East Jerusalem to Jewish settlers who deploy dubious means to secure deals. The New Imperial Hotel was sold behind Dajani's back, despite the fact that he is a protected tenant, and the \$1.8m deal for the three properties was signed by a Greek official who has since disappeared.

-- Read the full article at <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/jul/21/jerusalem-jaffa-gate-new-imperial-hotel-final-showdown>

-- By Sarah Helm

"Courtesy of Guardian News & Media Ltd"



The New Imperial Hotel

Asian Ecumenical Institute of CCA to train prospective Church and ecumenical leaders

Twenty-seven young ecumenists from across Asia are currently attending the month-long Asian Ecumenical Institute (AEI) organized by the Christian Conference of Asia. The AEI aims at providing ecumenical formation and leadership development training for prospective church and ecumenical leaders and is being held at the CCA headquarters in Payap University Campus in Chiang Mai, Thailand.

Focusing on the theme ‘Ecumenical Pilgrimage of Struggle for Peace with Justice in Asia’, this year’s Asian Ecumenical Institute commenced on 1 July 2019.

Dr. Mathews George Chunakara, General Secretary of the CCA stated, “The real value of the AEI would materialize and be recognized only after a few years. At least some participants of each year’s AEI training will eventually emerge as church or ecumenical leaders in their respective churches and in the region”.

“The month-long intensive training course and opportunities for interactions and dialogue while living together with their peer groups from multi ethnic and cultural Asian contexts will enrich and enable each participant to be more proactive and nurture ecumenism in their respective local context”, added the CCA General Secretary.

Romella Robinson, an ordained woman minister from the Presbyterian Church of Pakistan, shared her hopes and expectations from the AEI and stated “Ecumenism is not well known and is unheard by many in my local context. I am here to learn from the participants belonging to different church traditions in Asia and to develop strategies for nurturing much-needed grassroots-level ecumenism in Pakistan. I am fascinated to be part of this training”.

Frans Pangrante, an indigenous youth from Indonesia’s Toraja Church, shared that he had learnt the theories of ecumenism while doing his theological studies, and was now at the AEI to experience ecumenism in action.

“The AEI will be a great opportunity for mutual learning, discussions and developing collaboration with other participants of AEI”, said Pangrante.

This year’s outdoor study sessions include visits to the village of Mae-ai on the Thailand-Myanmar border, interactions with refugees and stateless people, visits to the stateless children’s school in Chiang Rai, and meeting with Buddhist monks for dialogue on faith in the context of religious plurality.

The faculty for AEI consists of internationally acclaimed ecumenists, theologians, academics, social activists as well as CCA programme executives.

Prominent members of the faculty of AEI include Dr. Wesley S. Ariarajah (Emeritus professor at Drew University in the USA), Dr. Eh Tar Gay (Vice-President of the Myanmar Institute of Theology), Rev. Dr. R.C. Thomas (Professor of Systematic Theology in India), Rev. Dr. Binsar Pakpahan (Professor at Jakarta Theological Seminary), Rev. Dr. Pradit Takerngrangsarit (formerly President of the Payap University and the Dean of the McGillivray College of Divinity in Chiang Mai), Dr. Le Ngoc Bich Ly (from the Institute of Religion and Culture in Thailand, Vietnam), Venerable Dr. Phramaha Boonchuy Doojai (Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya University, Thailand), and Mr. Jelvas Musau (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees), Dr. Mathews George Chunakara, General Secretary of the CCA and CCA staff members Dr. Chuleepran Srisoontorn, Rev. Jung Eun Moon, Dr. Reynaldo Racaza Ty, Rev. Dr. Ngur Liana, Dr. Ronald Lalthanmawia, and Ms. Rosiana Purnomo.

The Asian Ecumenical Institute will conclude its sessions on 30 July, 2019.

-- This article can also be found at www.cca.org.hk/

Participants of AEI-2019



Methodist Delegation Sees ‘Bitter Fruits’ of Palestinian Occupation

After a visit to the region, a delegation of Methodist representatives expressed horror at the military occupation of the Palestinian people.

“We witnessed the bitter fruits of military occupation that have fallen disproportionately upon the Palestinian people,” said a statement of the delegation, which was made up of leaders of the World Methodist Council, the British Methodist Church, and the General Board of Global Ministries of The United Methodist Church. “We heard stories of families being separated, the denial of basic human rights, inequality of treatment, and the need for the Palestinian people to have a voice in the process of governing their own lives and future.”

The group’s visit marked the seventh anniversary of the opening of the Methodist Liaison Office in Jerusalem, jointly sponsored by the three organizations. The delegation visited with individuals, churches and partners. Their goal was to further the office’s mission of engaging the world Methodist family in Christ’s ministry of peace, truth, justice and mercy among all peoples living in the land, in partnership with the Palestinian Christian Community.

The text of the full statement follows:



STATEMENT ON OCCUPATION OF PALESTINE



Recent pictures taken by WMC staff

We witnessed the bitter fruits of military occupation that have fallen disproportionately upon the Palestinian people. We heard stories of family separation, the denial of basic human rights, inequality of treatment, and the need for the Palestinians to have a voice in the process of governing their own lives and futures. In Gaza, the lack of provision of basic services such as electricity and clean water have reached a point of crisis.

We understand that this is a critical time in history and for the pursuit of a just peace between Palestine and Israel.

Global generational shifts, economic changes, issues of climate justice, and the current international political discourse churn on the horizon like a great storm.

We see the beauty and resilience of the people of the land, even in a time where it feels that all optimism could be lost. Despite this feeling, many look toward the future with hope, and they appeal to the world to stand with them in solidarity.



We have seen the suffering of the indigenous Christian community. We join their call to everyone to act decisively to support nonviolent actions for peace and justice for all – Palestinians and Israelis.

We will continue to pray for all people in the region, and to remain there, through our Methodist liaison office, in order to walk in solidarity with those of all faiths who seek justice, peace and equal rights through nonviolent actions.

Blessed are the peacemakers.

Bishop Ivan Abrahams, General Secretary, The World Methodist Council; Rev. Dr. Jong Chun Park, President, The World Methodist Council; Thomas Kemper, General Secretary, General Board of Global Ministries, The United Methodist Church; Doug Swanney, The Connexional Secretary, The British Methodist Church

World Methodist Evangelism Strategizes for the Future

World Methodist Evangelism (WME) is a connection point for Christians within the global Methodist Wesleyan family who are dedicated to becoming channels of transformation through the power of God's Holy Spirit. A crucial source of guidance for WME comes from our Regional Secretaries who are located across Africa, Asia, Eurasia, Europe, North America, Pacifica, and South America. These global leaders help identify the challenges facing the church in their part of the world. World Methodist Evangelism Regional Secretaries recently gathered in Seoul, South Korea to create strategies for ongoing work worldwide. Rev. Chung Suk Kim, WME's Regional Secretary for the Far East and Senior Pastor of Kwanglim Church, graciously hosted the event.

Christians worldwide face many hurdles as they share the good news of Jesus Christ and WME is committed to coming alongside our sisters and brothers to equip them to meet these challenges. During this gathering, strategies were created to address a wide range of issues such as:

- the deliberate and strategic expansion of Islam
- the prevalence of nominalism, secularization, and pluralism
- the challenges of migration, poverty, and access to health care
- the need for the translation of teaching resources

- the need for church planting and inner-city church revitalization

- the importance of reaching the next generation

Several of WME's current programs such as the Order of the FLAME and Embrace are well suited to address these challenges. The various components of these training opportunities will be shaped by the unique issues of each area. Plans have begun to expand this work to Indonesia, Brazil, Kenya, Russia, the Baltics, and Eastern Europe. Ongoing collaboration with Vision Africa to provide Media and Communication education has proven to be extremely effective and plans have begun to broaden the reach of that annual training opportunity.

Translation efforts are also underway for WME's evangelism resources and based on the discussions in Seoul, efforts are being made to develop a range of online evangelism resources as well.

We are grateful for the commitment of our Regional Secretaries, and for their willingness to come alongside WME with their wisdom and guidance. God has blessed WME with creative leadership, and we are energized by the exciting opportunities that lay before us all.

-- To learn more about the work of World Methodist Evangelism, visit www.worldmethodist.org.



Regional Secretaries Meeting for the World Methodist Evangelism was held on May 31 and June 1.

United Methodist women determined to restore peace in Kivu

Women play a key role in restoring peace in the Congo, a country still recovering from nine years of war and the loss of some 5 million lives.

Around the time of the second Congo War, which raged from 1998 to 2003, fighting in Kivu in the eastern part of the country developed into two wars that continue to claim lives.

United Methodist women gathered recently in Bukavu and Uvira with their peers from other denominations to reflect on how they could bring peace and Christian unity to Kivu.

The Office of Christian Unity and Interreligious Relations supported the gathering financially. Opened in 2013 by the United Methodist Council of Bishops, the office engages with other Christian denominations to work toward unity and peace by strengthening interreligious relationships that enable community building.

Much of the conflict in the Congo has to do with the rich minerals and other natural resources in the central African country. Also contributing to the unrest are tribalism and interethnic conflict between local communities like Benyamurenge, Bafuliro and Bembe in the highlands of Uvira, Minembwe and Itombwe, and from the presence of Allied Democratic Forces rebel groups in Beni.

Compounding the crisis is the persistent Ebola virus disease. The religious community is not immune to the problems, and division within churches has also occurred.

“I want to use my strength and intelligence to sensitize women ... to cultivate the spirit of peace and mutual acceptance in our communities [and], finally, to have unity,” said Jolie Mwaidi, a United Methodist Women leader. She explained that the women begin by identifying problem communities and asking if they can bring the gospel message.



A United Methodist women's choir sings during a consultation on peace and Christian unity in Uvira, Congo. Photo by Philippe Kituka Lolonga, UM News.

“After the message, if the communities agree to live together, we pray with them,” she said. In this way, the women connect with local political and administrative authorities, Mwaidi added.

Kito Bonane, UMW-Kivu vice president, said as God's children, women must work to restore peace in places without it. “I want to get involved in my soul and conscience so that peace and Christian unity are observed in our communities,” she said.

The women agreed to evangelize grassroots communities by bringing the good news of the gospel to their neighbors, modeling how to live in peace and fostering Christian unity.

In Uvira, more than 350 women gathered for ecumenical worship that featured songs of peace and sketches on the quest for unarmed peace with the support of CONNEXIO. A partner of The United Methodist Church, CONNEXIO supports Methodist churches in some 20 countries. Among its responsibilities are diaconal, social, missionary and evangelistic work.

Rose Nabintu, a women's leader in Uvira, expressed gratitude that The United Methodist Church encourages women to seek peace.

And Deo Kurasa, the Nyalukemba neighborhood chief on the periphery of the city of Bukavu, congratulated the United Methodist women for their involvement in the search for peace.

“In my neighborhood Nyalukemba,” he said, “there was violence following the tribalism between communities, but with the women's effort on peace awareness, my community members now live together peacefully, without violence.”

The Rev. Clement Kingombe Lutala, associate superintendent of the Bukavu District, praised the women's efforts. “To everything we associate [with] the women,” he said, “there has never been a failure.”

Michel Kizibisha of the Kivu Annual Conference urged the women to take ownership of their involvement in maintaining security and peace.

Eastern Congo Episcopal Area Bishop Gabriel Unda Yemba also applauded the women's journey toward peace and promised to accompany them in their work.

-- This article can also be found at www.umnews.org

Pray for the Peaceful Reunification of the Korean Peninsula on 11 August

The World Methodist Council invited all its members churches to assist in spreading the word and calling for prayer for the Korean Peninsula. 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 and the Korean Christian Federation, 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 2019.

Lord, we were once one country. We were one 100 years ago when we cried out for Korean independence against the tyranny of Japanese imperialism. We were one when we broke the 36-year-old chain and cried for freedom at every corner of the Korean Peninsula. We had been one for 5,000 years. Thank you Lord for your grace that led us into one.

Lord, we were divided by foreign forces. Although we have struggled to create a world where one could freely move around without erecting barriers or division, yet even in the excitement of liberation from Japanese colonial rule, there is division behind great wounds. We did not want a disconnected relationship. However, the surrounding foreign powers turned a blind eye to our aspirations in pursuit of their own interests. The excitement of Korea's independence soon became a painful part of our history. O Lord, listen to our prayers that we may become one again.

Lord, we beseech you. Let us never again attempt war on this land, and let us establish our own permanent and peaceful regime that no foreign powers can avail. Even if the strong nations are indifferent to our peace and security, preferring their own interests, no forces can stop us from marching toward peace if we keep our hearts, our wills, and our strength united. Let us remind ourselves that we must carve out our own destiny. Lord, make us one.

Lord, we pray that the South and the North, the North and the South will live leaning on each other. We pray that if the South is in need, then the North can provide, and if the North is in need, then the South can provide, so that we may live helping each other. The South and the North, the North and South, want to build a happy and prosperous world. In a world of fierce global competition, we believe that promoting common prosperity between North-South/South-North is the only way to live, and believe in the wisdom of co-prosperity that promises future stability and abundance. With this wisdom, let us resume the Kaesong Industrial Complex, which has been closed for too long, and allow us to revisit the scenic beauty of Mt. Kumgang that it may no longer be neglected. Do not let us fall into the folly of misgauging either our ability or our obligation, and give us the courage to boldly carry them out for the sake of the co-prosperity of South and North/North and South.

Lord, hear the prayers of the beloved Christians throughout the world for peace and prosperity of the Korean Peninsula. May the people of the North and South/South and North meet each other with a smile, and may North Korea and the U.S. establish a peace treaty by ending the hostilities. Peace is what the South and North/North and South wish to share in accordance with our own will. Lord, give us peace. May there be no power able to block the grace of the Lord of Peace. Let us not shirk our obligation or delay for any reason. Now in this moment, give us faith with the ability to love. Let the fervent prayers of Christians all over the world bloom in our hearts, and in every corner of the Korean Peninsula as a flower of hope.

Lord, may this prayer on this day, flowing from Baekdu to Halla, resonate from every point throughout the world, so that the breath of Christians of the North and South/South and North will be restored with the energy of peace and reunification.

In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Prince of Peace, we pray.



-- This article can also be found at <https://www.oikoumene.org/en/press-centre/events/sunday-of-prayer-for-the-peaceful-reunification-of-the-korean-peninsula>

Rwanda communities unite to reopen churches

After several months of volunteer work, district support, and Alabaster funds, 17 Nazarene churches in Rwanda reopened.

The churches had closed in 2018 after the government announced a new set of guidelines for buildings. Each congregation needed to remodel its building, including a new roof, new toilets, and other criteria.

Local pastors and church members worked together to raise money and offer volunteer labor to rebuild the churches. People sold their livestock, property, and possessions, including chickens, goats, clothes, and land. Even people outside of the Church of the Nazarene offered support to help these churches reopen in their local communities.

“We have experienced God’s presence during this big challenge in the history of the church in Rwanda,” said Simon Pierre, Rwanda Northwest district superintendent.

Nine buildings remain closed, and the Church of the Nazarene in Rwanda will continue to remodel as many of them as possible.

“We believe that of the remaining churches closed, it is only the building that’s closed while the churches are still open,” Pierre said. “We stand on God’s Word —

‘Upon the Rock I will build my Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.’”

Prayer is requested for the Church of the Nazarene in Rwanda as leaders continue working toward reopening the remaining buildings.



People carrying supplies to help with the remodel of the church

-- This article can also be found at www.nazarene.org/news

Called to be bearers of hope

More than 60 people from all over Australia gathered in Nadi, Fiji for the first President’s Conference to be hosted by UCA Assembly President Dr. Deidre Palmer.

The theme of the conference, “For the Whole Creation” reflects the key commitments of the Assembly and the wider Uniting Church to take action to address climate change and gender justice.

The location of the Conference in Fiji provided the opportunity to better understand the impacts of climate change, particularly in the Pacific region where communities are at the forefront of both the most devastating effects and the push for an urgent response.

Throughout the Conference, there was time spent in conversation and in worship with our brothers and sisters from the Methodist Church in Fiji, further strengthening the longstanding friendship between our Churches.

Participants travelled from every Synod in Australia to the Tanoa International Hotel and included a diverse range of ages, cultural backgrounds, lay and ordained, in various places of ministry including congregations, prison, hospital and school chaplains, as well as Synod, Assembly and Agency staff.

-- Read more of this story at <https://assembly.uca.org.au/news>



Attendees at the President’s Conference in Fiji

Special Celebratory Weekend at the Old Rectory

The weekend of 13th and 14th of July saw Epworth Old Rectory hosting not one, but two, special celebrations.

The first on Saturday 13th saw the staff of the Rectory welcoming delegates from The Methodist Heritage Conference which was being held in Lincoln over the 12th, 13th and 14th. Approximately half of the delegates arrived at 3pm to enjoy a tour of the rectory and hear the Wesley Story told by Gillian Crawley, the rectory manager and Jenny Carpenter, one of the rectory trustees. After their tour they enjoyed refreshments then walked to St. Andrews church to see Rev. Samuel Wesley's tomb before moving on to see other Wesley related sites and then afternoon tea, along with all the other delegates who had by then arrived from their tours around Lincoln, at Wesley Memorial Church. Their day ended with a service conducted by Rev. Barbara Glasson, president of the Methodist Conference, who was introduced by Owen Roberts, a Methodist Heritage officer, and which ended with communion being taken in Susanna Wesley's kitchen, where she preached to audiences as large as two hundred or more. Following communion there was the blessing of the new quilted wall hanging, created by a number of local women, carried out by Helen Croft the minister of Winterton Methodist Chapel. There was then the opportunity for the delegates who hadn't been on the afternoon tour to wander around the house and get their copies of the new Susanna Wesley book, "From a Mothers Pen" signed by Charles Wallace who compiled and edited the book.

All this was part of the celebrations of the 350th anniversary of Susanna Wesley's birth. The second part of the weekend was also part of those celebrations in that *Pride and Prejudice* reflects many aspects of Susanna's life. The story of the Bennett family is female oriented, and the majority of Susanna's surviving children were female. Both families had strong, well educated female characters, both had elopements and rapidly arranged marriages, but I am very pleased to say that Susanna was nothing like Mrs. Bennett.

Chapterhouse Theatre Company, based in Lincoln, made a first appearance at The Old Rectory on Sunday the 14th, performing their take on Jane Austen's story *Pride and Prejudice*, which was very well received by a large audience who had enjoyed their picnics on the formal lawn in the front of the newly erected stage set up by the cast in preparation for their play to begin at 7pm. The cast of eight young men and women were amazing, with many period costume changes occasioned by the fact that they played more than one part each. The young ladies, even off set prior to the performance beginning, while in costume behaved the part of decorous young ladies, and the hauteur of the young men playing Mr. Darcy, and Mr. Bingley was a marvel to behold. A great credit to their acting skills as they were very personable modern young men.

Our next events for this season include a Living History Day when the rectory will be peopled by members of the family carrying out their daily tasks, and then in August we welcome back Handlebards to present "Much Ado about Nothing", again with a picnic on the formal lawns prior to the performance starting.

For details of any events, opening times etc, check out our Facebook page or telephone 01427 872268 Monday to Friday, or even better - pop in to see us. Everyone is welcome.

-- Article provided by Cath Fordham



Pride and Prejudice being presented at Epworth Old Rectory



We welcome your press releases, articles and resources! Please keep submissions to less than a page. We also ask that all stories are written, edited and ready to publish. Please contact us by **the last Monday of the month** at communications@worldmethodistcouncil.org if you would like your story to be included in our next edition of the First Friday Letter.

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 methodistmuseum.org.

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

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