



FIRST FRIDAY LETTER

The World Methodist Council September 2019

To translate click on this link: <http://first-fridayletter.world-methodistcouncil.org/> and choose your language.

Greetings from the General Secretary

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

Traveling to South Africa after our Steering Committee meeting in Mexico, I was surprised by the many global leaders in government, business, civil society and academia who were on their way to the World Economic Forum (WEF) meeting in Cape Town to explore how to create inclusive, sustainable growth on the continent.

It was encouraging to note that the World Methodist Council Steering Committee addressed many of the issues on the WEF agenda. In his Presidential address, Dr. J.C. Park raised the matter of inclusion in the global economy, while I addressed climate justice. In many ways, this was a word in season ahead of the Climate Action Summit to be held in New York later this month. In her closing remarks, our Vice-President, Ms. Gillian Kingston, reminded us that we all belong to the “Oikos,” the household of God.

At our Steering Committee, we focused on climate justice, one of the three themes identified by the Houston Conference. We heard about oceans rising in the Pacific, which leads to forced migration. We have no choice but to take climate change and its impacts seriously. A recently published report by the World Bank titled *Lifelines: The Resilient Infrastructure Opportunities* calls for more resilient infrastructure that can withstand more frequent or stronger floods, earthquakes, and other natural disasters. We need to live life in the present and act now before it is too late. In the letter from James to the early Christians “all God’s people scattered over the whole word” he emphasizes the importance of actions along with faith, “so then, those who do not do the good they know they should do are guilty of sin.” James 4:17

The officers of the Council had a very constructive meeting with Mexican government representatives; we committed to working with all in the region seeking peace. Amongst the many topics discussed at the Steering Committee, we issued a statement in which we affirmed solidarity with the Methodist Church in Hong Kong and all those engaged in peace building.

Later this month, I will form part of a panel addressing the concern of growing nationalism and racism at an interfaith conference hosted by the Community of Sant’Egidio under the theme, *Peace with No Borders*. I implore your prayers for this gathering and for the activities taking place across the global connexion like Christian Unity Gathering 2019. The Anniversary of JDDJ Celebrated, A Call by NAFAUM Leaders to Speak Out Against Racist Violence and White Supremacy and Congress of Asian Theologians’ Ninth Summit in Indonesia are all featured in this edition of the First Friday letter.

Shalom,

Ivan



2019 Steering Committee Meeting in Mexico City



A dialogue meeting of the Mexican Government and WMC Steering Committee members looked at how each country has addressed peace and justice throughout their governments. Representatives were from the host country, Germany, Ireland, Korea, Nigeria, South Africa and the USA. Mexico is implementing new programs to assist its people financially by helping them secure jobs. It is believed that diminishing poverty will decrease the street violence.

A press release was held on unity, nationalism, and peace by WMC General Secretary Bishop Ivan Abrahams, President Rev. Dr. J.C. Park and Vice President Gillian Kingston. Bishop Dr. Moises Morales (second from the end on the right) and Rev. Samuel Murillo introduced and welcomed the WMC Steering Committee to Mexico.



The WMC Steering Committee broke bread with their host at the Iglesia Metodista El Mesías Church, coming together for a cultural night. The experience included dancing depicting the history of the Mexican states, Mariachi bands, and celebration through home cooked food and the sharing of conversation.



Friends of the World Methodist Museum Banquet

The Friends of the World Methodist Museum celebrated Susanna Annesley Wesley the ‘Mother of Methodism’ and Heroine of the Christian Faith at its 35th annual banquet with Rev. Dr. John Beyers.

“One can learn a great deal about a person by staying in his or her home,” explained banquet keynote speaker, the Rev. Dr. Beyers. “For the past eight years, I have been privileged to serve as a World Methodist Council trustee of the Epworth Old Rectory, the home of the Wesley Family after the great fire of 1709 until the death of The Rev. Samuel Wesley, Vicar of St. Andrew’s Parish Church, in 1735. Across these years, I have spent hours upon hours in the Rectory planning and overseeing the ongoing restoration of the Grade 1, Queen Anne style home in which the seeds of the 18th century Methodist Revival movement were sown.”

“At the heart of this great structure is the fire-side kitchen where the remarkable Susanna Wesley nurtured her growing family and the villagers of Epworth alongside her husband,” Beyers said. Funny, exciting, and dramatic, these words and more could be used to describe how Dr. Beyers educated and entertained his listeners.

“I am delighted to pay tribute to the ‘Mother of Methodism’ on her 350th birthday and to thank God for her enduring contribution to the Christian church,” he explained.

Beyers is the senior pastor of First UMC in LaGrange, GA, is a Trustee of Epworth Old Rectory, member of the World Methodist Council, and teacher for The World Methodist Evangelism Institute. He also teaches on the faculty of the North Georgia Conference’s elite Leadership UMC program. He has won many awards and been involved in the spread of Methodism and its history.

Bishop Ivan Abrahams, General Secretary of the World Methodist Council, shared brief remarks and updated the Friends of the Museum on the Council’s activities and initiatives. Four new directors were elected to the 15 member Friends Board of Directors.



Dr. Ibram X Kendi at the Christian Unity Gathering 2019 in October

Ibram X. Kendi is one of America’s foremost historians and leading antiracist voices. He is a New York Times bestselling author and the Founding Director of The Antiracist Research & Policy Center at American University in Washington, DC. A professor of history and international relations, Kendi is an ideas columnist at The Atlantic. He is the author of THE BLACK CAMPUS MOVEMENT, which won the W.E.B. Du Bois Book Prize, and STAMPED FROM THE BEGINNING: THE DEFINITIVE HISTORY OF RACIST IDEAS IN AMERICA, which won the National Book Award for Nonfiction. At 34 years old, Kendi was the youngest ever winner of the NBA for Nonfiction. He grew up dreaming about playing in the NBA (National Basketball Association), and ironically he ended up joining the other NBA.

Kendi has published 14 academic essays in books and academic journals, including The Journal of African American History, Journal of Social History, Journal of Black Studies, Journal of African American Studies, and The Sixties: A Journal of History, Politics and Culture. He has published op-eds in numerous periodicals, including

The New York Times, The Guardian, Washington Post, London Review, Time, Salon, Diverse: Issues in Higher Education, Paris Review, Black Perspectives, and The Chronicle of Higher Education. He commented on a series of international, national, and local media outlets, such as CNN, MSNBC, NPR, Al Jazeera, PBS, BBC, Democracy Now, and Sirius XM. A sought after public speaker, Kendi has delivered hundreds of addresses over years at colleges and universities, bookstores, festivals, conferences, libraries, churches, and other institutions in the United States and abroad.

His third book, HOW TO BE AN ANTIRACIST, was published August 13, 2019.

The Christian Unity Gathering will be held in Point Comfort, Virginia on October 14-16th.



International Meeting - “Peace with no Borders: Religions and Cultures in Dialogue” September 15th-17th 2019 at Community of Sant ‘ Egidio in Madrid. Bishop Ivan Abrahams will be serving on a panel “Resurgence of Racism in Today’s Societies” and his remarks will be posted soon.

Anniversary of Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification Celebrated

Words are inadequate to describe the warmth of the welcome extended by the Methodist Church in Mexico with music, dance, many flavours of food, conversation and prayer. The Steering Committee where possible meets alongside member churches. Meeting in Mexico City the Committee was enriched by the life of the local Church and the dynamic vibrant historic centre of Mexico City. Bishop Dr. Moises Morales and Youth and Young Adults chair, Rev. Samuel Murillo extended a particular welcome before the meeting was constituted with worship and celebration of Holy Communion.

In his opening address President of the Council, Rev. Dr. J.C. Park, among many other concerns noted, “We are living in the ‘Walled World’ in which the 73% of world’s income is own by the 14% of world’s population in the global North while the 27% of world’s income is own by the 86% of world’s population in the global South. The six prominent walls are DMZ-Korea, Australian Northern Approach, The United States-Mexico Wall, The Melilla Border Fence/The Ceuta Border Fence in Northern Africa, Schengen Border in Europe and The Palestine Wall. It is time to move away from complacent Christianity.”

This meeting had a specific focus on climate change and environmental justice. General Secretary Ivan Abrahams quoted a United Nations report, “we risk a ‘climate apartheid’ scenario where the wealthy buy their way out of rising heat and hunger while the rest of the world is left to suffer.” Responses include the Creation Care Summit promoted by the Education Committee. This will result in on-line courses in creation care. Worship resources for the Season of Creation are being collated from member churches. These will be made available to enrich the liturgical response to climate change.

The Uniting Church in Sweden, will host the 22nd World Methodist Conference in Gothenburg with the theme, ‘On the Move’. It is time to begin planning to attend. The Council wants to encourage young people to attend and has given every member church an additional place on the Council for a Youth or Young Adult. Now is the time to think about how that person will be enabled to attend. Details of the Conference are being added to the website as they become available. <https://worldmethodistconference.com>

The Council has extensive relationships with other churches and ecumenical agencies. Rosemarie Wenner, Geneva Secretary, presented a very detailed report. Of special note was the Consultation on Migration. Forty people from the Methodist family worked together to discern how our churches might respond to

the challenges and opportunities. **Read the full report at <https://worldmethodistcouncil.org/god-is-on-the-move-a-call-to-be-the-church-in-a-new-way/>**

Celebrations are encouraged to celebrate the 20th anniversary of the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification (JDDJ) on Reformation Day – October 31st. Twenty years from the first signing of the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification, there is increased trust and openness as the five world communions (Roman Catholic Church, the Lutheran World Federation, the World Methodist Council, the World Communion of Reformed Churches, and the Anglican Communion) who signed it work more closely together, particularly as regards developing the link between justification and justice, and praying/worshipping together as people who share a common baptism.

The core message of the JDDJ is 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.”

The resignation of Rev. Tim Macquiban as chair of the Ecumenical Relations Committee was received with deep regret. The Steering Committee has appointed Rev. Tony Franklin-Ross to serve as Chair until the next Council Meeting.

World Methodist Evangelism and the Evangelism Committee reported that the Order of the Flame, a key programme to encourage young clergy, is to be launched outside the USA. The word ‘excited’ was used many times during the presentation as future opportunities were shared.

Theological Education shared the regional Initiative of the South East Asia Study Bible, which is in the process of being translated into regional languages.

Family life spoke of its commitment to ‘Child Friendly Churches’ in conjunction with the World Council of Churches and UNICEF. The report also spoke of a focus on children impacted by environmental justice issues.

The Inter-Religious committee reported on the Pilgrimage to Jordan, Palestine and Israel in conjunction with Eco-peace enabled participants to dialogue with local people and groups, with a particular focus on the use of water and inter-religious peace-making. The Committee is proposing the pilgrimage be repeated during United Nations Harmony week, February 2nd to 7th 2020.

Anniversary of JDDJ Celebrated continued...

The Council sent greetings, assuring the prayers of the Methodist family, to the Hong Kong Council of the Church of Christ in China and the Methodist Church in Hong Kong in the light of the ongoing protests in Hong Kong.

Four members of the Religious Affairs Department of the Mexican Government met with the Council for a productive dialogue. The focus: peace building, human rights and building tolerance between diverse groups in Mexico.

Council Affiliates Wesley Men and World Federation of Methodist and Uniting Church Women reported on their work. Wesley Men are updating their website, see www.Wesleymen.org.

WFMUCW have conducted six Area Seminars since February 2018 (in Myanmar, Northern Ireland, Fiji, Hong Kong, Ghana and Brazil) with further seminars in the USA and Kenya planned for the remainder of this year.

The Methodist Ecumenical Office in Rome (MEOR) is currently filled with an interim appointee. The job description has been revised and the position will be advertised with a start date for the new appointee of September 2020.

-- *World Methodist Council Steering Committee*
Mexico City, August 28 - 30, 2019

Steering Committee expresses solidarity with Hong Kong Methodists

The World Methodist Council Steering Committee meeting in Mexico City 28-30 August greets you in the name of Christ our risen saviour.

We are deeply conscious of the unrest in Hong Kong and we write to you, our sisters and brothers in the Methodist Church Hong Kong and the Church of Christ in China Hong Kong as fellow members of the WMC, to assure you of our love and solidarity in these difficult times. We greatly respect the ongoing peace building work in which you are engaged.

Our hearts are burdened by the continuing protests in Hong Kong and the conflict this is causing in your society. It is our constant desire that all people live in safety so that we can flourish and fulfill our God-given potential.

We know that we join our prayers with those of the whole global Methodist, United and Uniting Church family as you seek to show God's love and compassion and seek the way of righteousness.

We are reminded of these words from Colossians 3:12-15 and they are our prayer for you;

“Therefore as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourself with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience. Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone.

Forgive as the Lord forgave you.

And, over all these virtues put on love, which binds all together in perfect unity.” (NIV)

Amen.

*Methodist Church
Hong Kong*



Evangelism crusades enrich spiritual lives in Zimbabwe

Almost 200 miles from the Harare, Zimbabwe's capital, lies Masvingo Town, which is among the 13 districts of the Zimbabwe Episcopal Area.

In Masvingo District, a mission area of United Methodism's Zimbabwe West Annual Conference, the church is winning souls to Christ through three crusades in a resettlement area and two growth points where the population is concentrated.

For years, the absence of The United Methodist Church in the region was by design of the colonial power that designated areas of evangelism to missionary societies. Those restrictions were removed when Zimbabwe achieved independence in 1980. Nearly four decades later, The United Methodist Church is still working to penetrate this remote, impoverished area with the Gospel.

In June, the first of three crusades took place at Crown Range Resettlement in Chiredzi, 270 miles from Harare and 120 miles from Masvingo Town. The Rev. Jairous Mafondokoto, Masvingo District superintendent, expressed delight that "the long awaited, three-day crusade, door-to-door campaigns and mission work" were successful.

The bishop's office, through the Rev. Vienna Mutezo, connectional ministries/deputy administrative assistant to the bishop, approached possible donor partners to fund the crusades. The United Methodist Board of Global Ministries responded positively to her request.

"In Masvingo District," Mutezo said, "the church is making unprecedented efforts to plant the church and address on social decadence and spiritual growth, while the government addresses food demands."

Since the district's inception in 1996, Mutezo has introduced some 4,000 people to Jesus Christ. She said the \$10,000 received from Global Ministries will fulfill the word in three areas: Crown Range Resettlement, Nemanwa Growth Point in Masvingo and Hama Growth Point in Chirumanzu in 2019.

Crown Range Resettlement is 19 miles from Chiredzi Town, making it difficult for members to commute to the nearest circuit. The church planted a preaching point at Crown Range, an area they identified as fertile to win more souls.

Jerry Ziyambi, 10, and his sister Tadiwa, 8, reside in one of the 11 villages where the crusade was held. The church now supports them by paying school fees

"Our church does not look on age or sex on its endeavor to win souls," the Rev. Benny Shiri, district connectional ministries chair. Jerry was amazed by the respect he got from the congregation and by the number of church members who worshiped in his area during the crusade.



The Rev. Vienna Mutezo (in clerical collar) celebrates an evangelism crusade with United Methodist women in Chiredzi Town, Zimbabwe. Photo by Kudzai Chingwe, UM News.

"I was very much excited," the boy said. "If even one soul is won, I will be happy. ... Considering my young age, I never thought the church could take my efforts seriously and follow me."

While he was waiting for church leaders to come for their preliminary visit, Jerry identified an open space and houses to be used during the crusade. "The open space was big enough to pitch a tent," he said.

District leaders recalled how Jesus sent his disciples, two by two, to win souls and decided to follow that model. Four teams of evangelists and pastors went into the villages to visit individuals and households. Eighteen families who were visited attended the crusade.

"I am happy to be visited by the pastor and receive a prayer from him," said Rebecca Masocha, 60. "This is new to me. I am greatly honored and humbled. I promise to join you from today onward."

-- Read the full article at umnews.org

News media contact: Vicki Brown at (615) 742-5470 or newsdesk@umcom.org. To read more United Methodist news, subscribe to the free Daily or Weekly Digests.

Lutheran Church Recognizes Emanuel Nine as Martyrs

On August 8, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) approved a “Resolution to establish June 17 as the Emanuel 9 Day of Repentance”. This action was voted on during the Churchwide Assembly of the ELCA which met in Milwaukee, Wisconsin by a vote of 887-8.

The ELCA is one of the largest Protestant mainline denominations in the United States counting 3 million members worshipping in 9000 congregations. It is also one of the least diverse denominations with 95 percent of congregants identifying as “White”.

The resolution was authored by the Rev. Michael Vinson (Primary Author, Pastor - Purdue University Lutheran Ministry), Rev. Kenneth Wheeler, Rev. Kwame Pitts, Rev. Angela Khabeb, Rev. Anglea Shannon, Ms. Suzannah Porter, Francisco Herrera, M.Div., and Yvette

Newberry White. It was motivated by the fact that the murderer of the Emanuel Nine was a baptized member of an ELCA church. Also, two of the Emanuel Nine were educated in ELCA-affiliated Seminaries.

Among the actions called for by the resolution include placing the names of the Emanuel Nine in ELCA publications to venerate their martyrdom and help lead the denomination to repentance because of the white supremacy and racism in the ELCA church; tangible monetary donations to the Emanuel Nine memorial; and sustained conversations with the AME Church on ways of repentance and reconciliation in the matter of white racism.

-- The text of the resolution can be viewed <https://gallery.mailchimp.com/8253b0952c51f2b3dcb331ea6/files/60ff5f2a-c677-4d72-84eb-8458eb0ac70b/ELCA.docx>

Bangladesh children receive critical medical treatment

Chumi* is among 19 children in Bangladesh to receive medical treatment funded in part by the Kids Reaching Kids missions offerings. Before the treatment, she was unable to move her right arm properly after she accidentally burned her arm in a mud oven when she was seven years old.

“I couldn’t move my hand normally,” Chumi said. “I couldn’t do any work with my burnt hand.” She could not play with her friends, and her community rejected her. They were repelled by the sight of her poorly healed injury.

“People didn’t want to meet my daughter,” Chumi’s mother said. “We also didn’t bring her with us when we went to our relatives’ houses to attend any social program or family event, like a religious festival or wedding. But now we can take her to any program.”

Her parents initially tried get her the medical attention she needed, but they could not afford it; they nearly lost hope of ever seeing their daughter healed.

That’s when the district Sunday School and Discipleship Ministries team listed Chumi as a potential recipient in the Kids Reaching Kids program. Eventually, Chumi was selected, and a specialist surgeon performed the procedure she needed.

Now, thanks to kids around the world who raised money for the program, Chumi and 18 other sick or disabled children in Bangladesh were chosen to receive critical medical treatment that they could not otherwise afford.

Though her recovery will take some time, Chumi can now move her hand, and the doctor taught her some exercises and gave her some medicine to help the healing process. Chumi said that people are no longer afraid of her, and she has been accepted in her community and by her extended family.

Currently, she is in the 11th grade, and her dream is to finish her studies and get a good job. She wants to be the light in the darkness of her impoverished family. She expressed gratitude to the Church of the Nazarene and SDMI for their generosity and support for her treatment.

Besides Chumi, six other children received surgeries, including heart and cleft lip surgeries. All of the 19 chosen children have visited doctors and many are receiving medicine for diseases, with follow-up doctor visits or treatments included.



**Name changed to protect security
--Church of the Nazarene Eurasia*

A Call by NAFAUM Leaders to Speak Out Against Racist Violence and White Supremacy

In the aftermath of the mass shootings in El Paso, Texas, Dayton, Ohio and Gilroy, California, we, the National Association of Filipino American United Methodists (NAFAUM), are joining with the Council of Bishops calling the people called Methodists to name the sins of white supremacy and xenophobia which is fueling the culture of violence and put an end to its ripples in society. These tragedies are some of hundreds of mass shootings* in the US in 2019. It now adds to the scores upon scores of mass shootings across decades.

As Filipino Americans, history reminds us “on Jan. 19, 1930, after a night when Filipino men were seen with white women in a dance hall in Watsonville, California, a mob of 500 attacked the Filipinos in the town and rioted for five days. On January 22, Tobera was shot and killed in his farmhouse bunk. No one was charged for his murder. Instead of sympathy for the Filipino workers, the violence fueled more anti-Filipino sentiment throughout the farm communities of Northern California. Filipino Americans aren’t above the fray in any of the gun violence happening today. We were targeted before. We can be targeted again.”**

As disciples of Jesus Christ, our Wesleyan faith teaches us to be humble servants for humanity and instruct do no harm by rejecting bad, evil, and hate in every form, do good and stay in love with God. With this firm belief, we stand tall together to affirm to ourselves, our neighbors, and the wider community these shared beliefs.

We call upon our fellow Asian Americans and United Methodists, and everyone regardless of their race, ethnicity or religion, to join us in rejecting the culture of hate and violence. We reject and con-

demn all forms of white supremacy and the harmful ideology of white nationalism, together with all forms of racism, xenophobia, and prejudice. Let us not give into rising tides of evil around us, nor simply be ones who curse the evil, but stand together as candles who by our actions shed that light which can extinguish the evils of hatred, indifference, oppression, and violence we see around us.

We join with the Council of Bishops in calling everyone “to be the people we profess to be: disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world (Book of Discipline, Paragraph 120). We pray for healing among those who are grieving, amendment of life among those who have done violence, and judgment upon our human hearts when our spoken words have contributed to violence (Matthew 12). We commit ourselves to the transformation of systems and laws that reflect the life that Jesus promises (John 10).”

* <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/mass-shootings-2019-more-mass-shootings-than-days-so-far-this-year/>

** Email Guillermo article dated 08/19 “Filipinos have seen when guns and white supremacy mixed”.

Grace & Peace,

NAFAUM Board 2018-2020:

*Rev. Edgar De Jesus, Rev. Dr. Lilian Gallo Seagren
Joash Mencias, Haniel Garibay, Rev. Dr. Arman Arellano, Sophia Agtarap, Riva Tabelisma, Dr. Ligaya Marasigan, Rev. Levi Laguardia, Pros Tumonong, Rev. Alex Campe, Pong Javier, Rev. Nelson Castorillo (Filipino Vitality Commission)*



Methodist Liaison Office Jerusalem July Report

In July, demolitions of Palestinian homes in Jerusalem areas continued, as well as for Bedouins living in the Wilderness areas. At the same time as homes were demolished, Israeli settlement homes continued to be built, and roads are under construction very close to Palestinian Villages in the West Bank.

New laws have been passed targeting children born to other people living in Israel, such as home health care workers from the Philippines and other countries. Children born in Israel to International care workers are scared during this summer vacation time, with the increased threat of being arrested and deported beginning on 1 August. This affects the UMC Tel Aviv congregation. Demonstrations continued to take place at the Dome of the Rock/Temple Mount in the Old City of Jerusalem.

We have preached, lead worship, and presided over communion at the UMC in Tel Aviv, St. Andrew's in Jerusalem and Tiberias. Angleena taught children's Sunday School during worship at St. Andrew's. We have attended worship services at Tantur, Christmas Lutheran Church in Bethlehem, and Church of the Nazarene. We offer pastoral care to several members of the church and the community.

The 7 year MLO review team came. A smaller delegation visited Gaza. Together, the whole group met with the Lutheran Bishop Azar, and were invited to join a non-violent act of demonstration by joining the local churches in demonstrating against the sale of church property in the Old City of Jerusalem by Jaffa Gate. The group continued with meeting various groups including: EAPPI, JIC, Al Haq, Defense of Children International, ECO Peace, Sam Bahour, Wi'am, teachers from Bethlehem Bible College, St. Andrew's pastor Rev. Dr. John McCollough, Tent of Nations, Princess Basma Center, and Hope School. Hearing from GBGM, BM, and World Methodist Council as well as staff from the MLO were important. Most of the group were also able to visit Hebron before they left.

David Wildman, Lorie Felder, Samar, Angleena and Kristen attended the 40th Anniversary celebration of Al Haq in Ramallah.

We met with the director of Four Homes of Mercy in Bethany. The Easter offering from Ponteland Methodist Church in England was given to the work at Four Homes, the church was inspired to respond in this way after Rev. John Howard had spoken to them during the year. We were able to deliver the gift to them and spend some quality time hearing about the continued



of lack of funds, but also how God is witnessed in the work they are doing with the special needs people they take care of each day.

In an opportunity to help out the Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land, Angleena was asked to offer several weeks of cover during the next three months at the Lutheran Church and guest house at the River Jordan, on the Jordan side of the river.

We attended a wedding for Samar's brother, Kristen attended a Henna party and the wedding celebration in Wadi Fukin and Battir for the Advance Project of Wadi Fukin's director's daughter.

Contributed to "Letters from Bethlehem." Updated and shared information on the FB Page

We are working on plans for the office planning retreat to be held at the Lutheran site at the Jordan River, in combination of one of Angleena's cover visits.

We continue to take Arabic lessons.

We have met with our Ecumenical colleagues through the Church of Scotland.

We have office meetings on a weekly basis.

We are also tending to healthy living and spiritual renewal.

Respectfully submitted by Angleena Keizer and Kristen Brown

First Resident to serve Auckland WMC

World Methodist Evangelism (WME) is excited to launch the Residency In Mission program with the placement of our first Resident, Eliza Edge. Eliza will serve in Auckland, New Zealand at the Millwater Wesleyan Methodist Church of New Zealand.

As a part of WME's ongoing commitment to raise up the next generation of leadership in Evangelism and Mission, RIM seeks to foster evangelistic and missional engagement and learning among young adults in the Wesleyan Family through intentional service, guided mentorship, and robust theological reflection. Eliza will serve with key leaders in church planting, evangelism, and mission in a highly secular environment in Auckland.

Despite New Zealand's famous scenery, known internationally through movies such as the Lord of the Rings trilogy, and its first-world economic status, New Zealand has always had a secular cultural component. In more recent years there has been a marked increase of this secularism with nearly 40% of the population indicating they have no religion. According to one analysis New Zealand is the most secular English-speaking country in the world! Against this secularism backdrop and with its accompanied mental health and addiction issues there are many opportunities to share the gospel of Jesus Christ. Such work needs always needs to be done intelligibly and with grace and truth (John 1:14). Rev. Dr. Richard Waugh, WME Regional Secretary for the Pacific Region and National Superintendent of the Wesleyan Methodist Church of New Zealand says, "It is vital that young people have opportunity to understand the gospel and why the church is such a life-giving part of society. Young committed Christians can have a prominent role in such missional work, and we are excited by the potential of 'Residency in Mission' (RIM) through World Methodist Evangelism."

Eliza is uniquely qualified to serve through a variety of gifts and talents. A recent graduate of the University of Cincinnati, Eliza has been active Wesleyan Methodist ministries throughout her life. She has experience working with youth and children and is an accomplished musician. Using these gifts and experiences in Auckland will not only serve the local church but also help prepare her to use these gifts through lifetime of service to the Kingdom of God. Eliza describes her service with great humility, "I am under no misconcep-

tion that I can save a country, a city or even one person, but I do know that God can and has saved the world and all I can do is allow the one who is almighty to work through me...."

The Residency In Mission program provides this real-life learning lab through a variety of activities:

- Working with World Methodist Evangelism Regional Secretaries and local ministry leadership, World Methodist Evangelism facilitates Residency In Mission opportunities for young adults. Ideally, these ministry contexts will be in cross-cultural, international settings to strengthen bonds of global ministry, mutual learning, and ministry partnership.
- Residency In Mission students will be embedded in places of service that allow them to use their gifts and talents to benefit the local ministry, while developing new skills, understanding, and leadership abilities.
- Mentors provided by World Methodist Evangelism will provide learning opportunities, coaching, mentoring, and spiritual guidance for Residency In Mission students.

We invite you to learn more about the need for the work of World Methodist Evangelism in New Zealand and the way RIM is filling that need HERE. *To learn more, about World Methodist Evangelism visit www.worldmethodist.org.*



Pictured: Eliza Edge preparing for her mission work

Congress of Asian Theologians' Ninth Summit begins in Indonesia

The Ninth Congress of Asian Theologians (CATS-IX) was inaugurated in a solemn ceremony held at the Gereja Bethel Indonesia (GBI) Medan Plaza auditorium in Medan, Indonesia's North Sumatra province.

More than 120 theologians from across Asia are participating in the CATS-IX. The participants took part in the opening worship service together with the local hosts, and witnessed traditional Indonesian worship that included welcoming cultural performances.

Rev. Agustinus Purba, moderator of Gereja Batak Karo Protestan (GBKP) delivered a homily based on the Biblical text Genesis 9:12-17.

Rev. Purba said, "Creation works cannot be separated from salvation works. The order and arrangement of the world must be a space of life for all creations, and a meeting space for God Himself. God's self-revelation, the design of creation, and the salvation of humans are all united. Humans cannot know the Creator without knowing His creations."

Archbishop Dr Willem TP Simarmata, Moderator of the CCA, opened CATS-IX with a call for a theological resistance to discrimination. He appealed to restore and renew the creation and overcome human's dominance over earth.

Emphasizing the need for participatory and inclusive ways of living together, Dr Simarmata said, "We must intensify our commitment to justice and peace for the healing of creation, in order to address Asia's contemporary challenges."

Dr Mathews George Chunakara, General Secretary of CCA who delivered the introductory and welcome address, pertinently asked, "Considering the enormous human resources, intellectual capacities, potentials, opportunities for mutual interactions and exchanges that are available within Asia, how successful have we been in presenting an authentic Asian theology?"

He elaborated upon the theme of CATS-IX, "Reconciliation, Renewal, and Restoration: Divine Indicative and Human Imperative", by stating that several issues in Asia concerning land, life, human relations, security, peace, and justice

must be articulated on the basis of biblical and theological perceptions and convictions from an Asian perspective. The indicative-imperative model, he said, provided the "scope for innovative theological thinking rooted in Asia's pluralistic contexts, which could then facilitate an articulation of the theme with authentic Asian theological emphasis".

The CCA General Secretary further added, "The discussions of CATS-IX prelude two major events that the CCA will organize in the near future with almost similar themes. The theme of the forthcoming Asian Ecumenical Women's Assembly (AEWA) in November 2019 will be 'Arise, Be Awake to Reconcile, Renew and Restore the Creation', and the theme of the CCA General Assembly will be, 'God, Renew Us in Your Spirit and Restore the Creation'."

Dr Henriette Hutabarat Lebang, Chairperson of the Communion of Churches in Indonesia (PGI) greeted the participants said, "CATS is a tremendous opportunity for young and old theologians ponder together in a rapidly changing Asia".

Fr Clarence Devadass of the Federation of Asian Catholic Bishops' Conferences (FABC), said that CATS was just one of the many collaborative efforts between the CCA and the FABC. The opening of CATS-IX was timely and auspicious, according to him, as it coincided with the Feast of Transfiguration. He hoped that CATS too would be a catalyst in transfiguring the work of theologians in Asia.

Rev. Bambang Jonan, Senior Pastor Emeritus of the GBI/ Medan Plaza, the host of CATS-IX addressed the participants, and said "With the competitive aspects in all walks of life, the relationship as religious people within the framework of the Great Commandment of Christ and as people created by God, we have the responsibility to conserve the earth, God's creation."

Four thematic presentations based on the main theme and sub-themes, seminar sessions, workshops, Bible studies and inter-faith dialogue sessions are part of the agenda of the four days' sessions.

-- This article can also be found on <http://cca.org.hk/home/>



AME Church Elects New Leadership for Women's Missionary Society and Young People's Division

Delegates from across the twenty Episcopal Districts of the African Methodist Episcopal Church spanning 39 countries gathered at the Hyatt Regency in Columbus, Ohio from July 23-August 1 to elect new leadership for the Women's Missionary Society (WMS) and the Young People and Children's Division (YPD) of the WMS. The WMS is the women's fellowship of the denomination, and the YPD is the premier connectional youth group (ages 2-26). The YPD elects its President from its members and a Director elected by the WMS. The YPD met from July 23-26 and the WMS from July 27-August 1. Per tradition, the close of the YPD Convention serves as the opening of the WMS Convention. This year at the 19th Quadrennial Assembly, new officers for the 2019-2023 period were elected for both auxiliaries. Below are the biographical sketches of the new Presidents and the reelected Connectional YPD Director.



Mrs. Deborah Taylor King

(Connectional President of the Women's Missionary Society of the AME Church)

As a native of Austin, Texas, Deborah holds a bachelor's degree in business from St. Edward's University. She served over 30 years in various management capacities with AT&T/SBC (Austin, Corpus Christi, and San Antonio). Her home church is Grant Worship Center in Austin, Texas. She has served in various capacities within the WMS including Local President, Area Chairperson, Episcopal District President and most recently Connectional First Vice President. In 2018, Paul Quinn College, Dallas, Texas, honored her with an Honorary Doctor of Humanities Degree. Mrs. King is married to Charles E. King; they are the parents of one son, Travis and the devoted grandparents of Dezmond.

Ms. Ringgold is a native of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. She graduated from Temple University and is a retired employee of the United States Internal Revenue Service. Before her election as Connectional Director, she served as the YPD Director of her Conference and Episcopal District. As Connectional YPD Director, two Episcopal District Director

leadership training retreats were initiated. Under her leadership, the attendance increased at the Annual Spring Leadership Training Institutes. Over \$100,000 scholarships were given through the annual Self Denial Program. Mission outreach projects include Souper Bowl of Caring, Reading Across America, Haiti Water Project. Increased outreach to children in the foster care system across the United States.



Ms. Wanda T. Ringgold

(Connectional Director, Young People and Children's Division of the WMS)

Mr. Richard Franklin Norris, III is a native of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Richard is currently an undergraduate student at the University of Pittsburgh (Pitt), where he is currently pursuing a bachelor's degree in Information Science. At Pitt, Richard has consistently made the Dean's List and is a member of the Phi Eta Sigma National Honor Society. Richard is a member of Morris Brown AME Church in Philadelphia, PA, where he has served as the Recording Secretary and Nominating Committee Chairperson of the local YPD. He served as 3rd Vice President of the Philadelphia Conference Branch YPD from 2012-2016. From January 2016 until July 2019, he served as the Chairperson of the Global Social Relations Committee of the Connectional YPD. Mr. Norris is a licensed preacher in the AME Church and is the son of the Reverend Richard Norris II and Thae'h Norris.

Mr. Richard Franklin Norris, III

(Connectional President, Young People and Children's Division of the WMS)



-- This article can also be found on <https://www.thechristianrecorder.com/>



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