



# FIRST FRIDAY LETTER

The World Methodist Council October 2019

## Greetings from the General Secretary

*Peace on earth we sing it  
and pay a million priest to bring it  
but after two thousand years of mass,  
we got as far as poison gas  
(Thomas Hardy, 1840 -1928)*

Despite Thomas Hardy's cynicism and stinging critique of Christians in particular and the Church specifically, I confidently greet you in the Name of our Lord and Savior, who came among us as a helpless infant and taught us to lay aside our swords and to love our enemies.

The Beatitudes, more commonly known as the Sermon on the Mount, bears the marks of Semitic poetry. The seventh blessing is about peacemakers, who are called children of God. The Biblical concept of peace is more than the absence of war or the inner feeling of tranquility. The Hebrew is "Shalom" or Arabic, "Salaam" which was the opening greeting to all presentations at the "**Peace With No Borders**" - Religions and Cultures in Dialogue consultation in Madrid convened by the Community of San'Egidio and the Catholic Archdiocese of Madrid (15-17 September). The theme was explored further in the **World Methodist Council dialogue with the Organization of African Initiated Churches** in Pietermaritzburg, South Africa (24-28 September).

Shalom, Salaam, Peace speaks of a sense of wholeness, harmony, and completeness – it points to the way things ought to be. The Aaronic benediction of Numbers captures the meaning more comprehensively; "*the Lord bless you and protect you; the Lord make His face shine on you, and be gracious to you; the Lord look with favor on you and give you peace*" (Num 6:24-25).

The historian Paul Kennedy in his book, *The Rise and Fall of Great Powers*, said that throughout history an empire is officially in decline when it spends more on swords than on plowshares. Weapons take food from the hungry.

Church requires continual reformation and transformation if it wishes to exercise its prophetic and public ministry. The Church's structures must model its vision, values and democratic principles; otherwise, it will not be taken seriously. We need to speak truth to power - even to governments that promote justice, peace, and security. Our task is to change the world through the love of Jesus Christ, which is a revolutionary activity and will, in many instances, comfort the afflicted and afflict the comfortable.

Jesus offered his first disciples the gift of peace saying; "*Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me so, I am sending you.*" (John 20:21) If we all follow this Divine mandate and fan into flame the gift of peace, the world will be an entirely different place. Let us follow the example of **Rev. Dr. Inderjit Bhogal and Rev. Dr. James T. Laney**, the 2018 and 2019 recipients of **The World Methodist Peace Award**.

The pop group U2 captures the frustration between longing for peace and not being able to realize it in their song, *Peace on Earth*.

*Heaven on earth  
We need it now  
I'm sick of all this  
Hanging around  
Sick of sorrow  
I'm sick of pain  
I'm sick of hearing  
Again and again  
That there is gonna be  
Peace on earth*

*Jesus in the song you wrote  
The words are sticking in my throat  
Peace on earth  
Hear it every Christmas time  
But hope and history won't rhyme  
So what's it worth  
This peace on earth.*

I am an eternal optimist, who believes that 'hope and can history rhyme.' As a prisoner of hope, I have seen what happens when we join hands with others who have the same commitment, vision, and values. The problems that we think are insurmountable can be overcome. All small acts taken in solidarity with others creates a tsunami that will eventually flatten and destroy injustice.

Peacemaking is not a passive activity; rather it demands a lot of emotional energy and can be a messy and risky business. To be a peacemaker does not require you to join a program, adhere to some social principles or ideas but to share in the mission of Jesus the Christ, the Prince of Peace.

Peace, Salaam, Shalom,

Ivan

## Bhogal and Laney named 2018 and 2019 Peace Award Recipients



*The Rev. Dr. Inderjit Bhogal  
2018 Peace Award Winner*

The World Methodist Council proudly announces its worthy recipients for the Peace Award for 2018 and 2019. The Peace Award is the highest honor bestowed by Methodists around the world.

**The Rev. Dr. Inderjit Bhogal is the 2018 recipient and the Rev. Dr. James T. Laney received the 2019 award.** “We are gratified and humbled by the work of these two great men who are shining examples of serving one’s fellowman through a lifetime of labor and sacrifice,” said General Secretary and CEO of the Council, Bishop Ivan Abrahams. “Their leadership inspires us to continue to work for peace and justice for all people,” he added.

**Dr. Bhogal**, currently living in Sheffield, England, first exhibited his will to step forward when needed as a young boy of only eleven. By the age of 20, he was one of the initiators of the very first interfaith group in the UK and has been a central figure in interfaith relations in Britain and Ireland since. Often facing criticism and opposition to interfaith work from people of beliefs, including his own congregations and colleagues, he did not hesitate to push for the rights of others.

For years, Bhogal has challenged and encouraged the British Methodist Church (BMC) to positively support the struggles of asylum seekers and refugees for justice and mercy. Until the recent Syrian refugee crisis dating to 2015, this was not popular but is now mainstream work.

He walked from the steps of the Town Hall in Sheffield to 10 Downing Street, London to hand deliver a letter to the Prime Minister and the British Government asking for a fairer deal for asylum seekers and that they not be detained in conventional prisons. He has consistently challenged his own denomination and other organizations to resist racism, sexism, homophobia and all forms of oppressive behavior. Many of his colleagues believe that this has been to the detriment of his own career as a clergyperson. Although he has been President of the Conference in the BMC, an honorary position, his refusal to sit on the fence and his outspoken insistence regarding matters of injustice have meant that many doors to positions of greater influence and responsibility have been closed to him, his nominee explained.

Beginning with his student days in the mid-1970s, Bhogal has visited Northern Ireland and supported the work of the Corrymeela Community. He was the only person of a minority ethnicity to hold a CEO role in the whole of Ireland. Bhogal is also the only person of a minority background to be appointed President of the BMC [2000-2001]. He is the President of the Methodist Peace Fellowship, Founder and President of the rapidly growing City of Sanctuary movement, which is committed to building cultures of welcome, hospitality and safety for asylum seekers, refugees and other vulnerable people. From this, numerous other initiatives like Universities of Sanctuary, Schools of Sanctuary, Churches of Sanctuary, and Maternity Wards of Sanctuary have grown. These involve countless numbers of groups and individuals working together to build cultures of welcome, hospitality and safety.

Bhogal’s ministry has included arranging pilgrimages to Ireland, Croatia and Punjab, India to promote a deeper understanding of peace and reconciliation for participants through engagement with people who have experience of living across borders, in a variety of contexts of conflict. On a day-to-day basis, he is constantly developing innovative and creative ways of involving people of different faiths, people who profess no particular faith, and people of different political backgrounds in the life and leadership of their communities.

## Bhogal and Laney, 2018 and 2019 Peace Award Recipients continued

**The Rev. Dr. Laney**, President Emeritus of Emory University, who currently resides in Decatur, GA, received the Award for his extraordinary and continuing efforts on behalf of the people of Korea. His association with Korea began in 1947 when he served there in the Army Counter-Intelligence Corps.

Having seen the tragedy of the divided Korea when he came to Korea in 1947, he dared to return to Korea in 1959 as a missionary with his family. He taught at Yonsei University in Seoul from 1959 to 1964. While teaching and guiding Korean students, he found a common human bond with the suffering people in Korea who inspired him to seek education of the heart throughout his later career as dean of a seminary and a university president.

In 1993, he returned to Korea for the third time when he was appointed Ambassador to South Korea by President Bill Clinton. The first North Korean nuclear crisis started in 1994, and the US was on the edge of war with North Korea, the nomination states. Laney helped diffuse the crisis by tirelessly working with President Clinton and former President Jimmy Carter to avoid an attack on North Korea. He passionately challenged the US Senate not to end up involved in another war with the numerous casualties of GIs stationed in South Korea.

In 1997, he returned to the US where he served for two years as special presidential envoy in Asia. From 1997 to 2003, he co-chaired the Council on Foreign Relations Task Force on Korea. He was a keynote speaker with former President Carter at the Roundtable Meeting for Peace on the Korean Peninsula held at the Carter Center in Atlanta in Nov. 2018. Event organizers included the World Methodist Council, Korean Methodist Church and the United Methodist Church.

Laney helped shift American foreign policy from snubbing the North Koreans to working together toward common ground. Korean scholar Stephen W. Linton told *The New York Times* that "I think history will see him [Laney] as the first ambassador to the whole peninsula." In an interview with Emory Magazine, Laney said that what he tried to contribute was a new way of looking at the situation on the Korean peninsula. Former US Secretary of Defense William J. Perry praised Laney's unprecedented leadership and visionary guidance in breaking the stalemate of the Cold War to acknowledge the right of the other side to exist. Laney encouraged and inspired former South Korean President and laureate of the Nobel Peace Prize Kim Dae-jung's Sunshine Policy of engaging North Korea for reconciliation and co-prosperity with South Korea. President Moon Jae-in also acknowledges his indebtedness to both Kim and Laney.

Laney has advocated for peace on the Korean peninsula by his numerous articles in Foreign Affairs, *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post* and many other publications. His most recent contribution was his keynote speech at the KMC-UMC-WMC Roundtable, "Meeting for Peace on the Korean Peninsula," held at the Carter Center and GBGM in November 2018. The Methodists, as well as ecumenical participants of the Roundtable, were deeply moved by Laney's words: "Peacemaking begins when we stop demonizing and being so skeptical and distrustful, no matter how bad the past has been. It begins with humility and the attitude of hearts."

A public presentation, open to the public, will be held for Rev. Dr. Bhogal and Rev. Dr. Laney. Interested persons are encouraged to attend and share their support to these great peacemakers and leaders for justice. Laney's presentation will be on November 20, 2019 in Atlanta with Dr. Jong Chun Park, WMC President, participating. Bhogal's presentation will be on March 27, 2020 in London with WMC representatives and leaders participating among many others.

The WMC Peace Award is given to individuals or groups "who have made significant contributions to peace, reconciliation and justice", considering courage, creativity and consistency in awarding it. It has been awarded since 1977. Recipients of the World Methodist Peace Award include: Habitat for Humanity International, Nelson Mandela, Jimmy Carter, Boris Trajkovski, former President of Macedonia, the Community of Sant'Egidio in Rome, and the Grandmothers of the Plaza de Mayo in Argentina.

To nominate a worthy individual or group for the World Methodist Council Peace Award, click on the following:

[www.worldmethodistcouncil.org/wmc-peace-award-nominations/](http://www.worldmethodistcouncil.org/wmc-peace-award-nominations/)



*The Rev. Dr. James T. Laney  
2019 Peace Award Winner*

## Peace Without Borders - Madrid 2019

A grand appeal was made to come out from behind our fences, from behind borders that became prisons and barriers, to rediscover the world as “a common home.” The religious leaders who came from all over the world to Madrid for the international meeting of Sant’Egidio in the ‘spirit of Assisi’, titled ‘Peace with No Borders’, gave voice to the “silent lamentations and cries of those who are excluded of wellbeing, as if they weren’t men and women like us.” And above all, those who are victims of too many wars that are still ongoing in our world. From Madrid there was also a strong ‘no’ that arose against religious extremism and against the classic temptation of believing that big problems can be solved on their own.

The final ceremony took place in Almudena square, filled with thousands of participants who had come from all over Europe to experience three days of dialogue and participate in the 27 panel discussions that were held in the Spanish capital. “We are worried for future generations,” states the appeal of the religious leaders. “Because we see the only planet for all being consumed as if it belonged only to few people. Because we see the re-emergence of a culture of power and nationalistic divisions, that has caused great destructions throughout the history. Because terrorism continues to target helpless people. Because the dream of peace seems to have grown weaker,” 30 years after the fall of the Berlin Wall that had given so much hope to the world. “Wars and peace, epidemics, security and cybersecurity, the displacement of populations, the planet’s sustainability and global warming, the task to end the nuclear risk and the reduction of inequalities are far larger than one single nation’s scope.”

But there was also a specific request coming from the international meeting: “We ask all, the responsible politicians, the richest of the world, the men and women of good will, to provide resources to prevent millions of children from dying without care every year and to send the millions of children to school who cannot go there. Let’s not hide behind a wall of indifference.”

Cardinal Carlos Osoro Sierra, who organised the meeting together with Sant’Egidio, spoke of days “in which we have been encouraged not to become islands, not to sow prejudice, but peace, because humanity in itself bears the inscription of fraternity.” It’s true that there are people trying to reinstate borders, among which the Mexican, in what Father Alejandro Solalinde, repeatedly threatened by drug traffickers, has suggestively called a “migrant times.” Marco Impagliazzo, president of the Community of Sant’Egidio from the large stage in Almudena square warned “there is just one heaven” and everyone turns to it “in despair, in joy, taking shelter under a shellfire in Syria, in worship - practiced in churches, synagogues, mosques, temples.”

In Madrid, everyone was also unanimous in defending the environment: “Today - Impagliazzo emphasized - we show our solidarity with the people of the Amazone. The air we breathe is not subject to customs’ authorities: it’s the same air for all. Young people were the first to recognize this, and they are rallying all over the world with generosity, standing for a liveable planet. I note that quite many youth participated to this meeting in Madrid!” At the end it was announced which city hosts the next international meeting in the ‘spirit of Assisi’: Rome 2020.



*Final Ceremony at Almudena Square Madrid*

# Kwazulu- Consultation Statement

Adopted by WMC and OAIC in Pietermaritzburg

## Who we are and why we are here

In a divided and polarized world, we as representatives of two communions, the World Methodist Council and the Organization of African Instituted Churches, have met at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Pietermaritzburg, South Africa, from 25th to 27th September, drawn by a common urgency and commitment to offer the message of God's transforming love and hope for Africa and the rest of the world. We believe that the message of the gospel of Jesus Christ has the ability to provide the world with life in its fullness (John 10:10).

We believe that the Holy Spirit has brought us together following our commitment to the lordship of Jesus Christ and transformation of our world, expressed in the scriptures. We are finding that in each other there points of commonality in the founding of our traditions and on these we want to build our mutual recognition and collaboration. We confess our sin of having ignored or at times undermined one another.

Our communions are witnesses that through this statement of intent we are working towards overcoming the centuries old ignoring of each other. Now we the two world communions thus adhere jointly to a common statement of intent. In addition, we rejoice in the fresh and new ways in which our two traditions can with vigor, trust and confidence work in realizing a deeper communion towards the full visible unity of the Church and to make manifest the growth in communion, which has already been experienced during the time we have been.

## What we affirm together

Experiencing a deep sense of our commonality:

We re-affirm the centrality of the scriptures, as the true and inspired word of God. We commit ourselves to share, learn from each other and celebrate the word of God for the healing and liberation of our continent and the rest of the world.

We affirm that the gospel of Jesus Christ calls for personal and social holiness, which manifests itself in the struggle for overcoming all forms of injustice, oppression and exploitation, which will lead to the restoration of God's image to all people.

We affirm through our discernment that the Holy Spirit uses one another's ministries, culture, worship and church life and community life, in order to transform Africa for the transformation of the world.

We affirm that all our journey together should be guided first, by understanding each other and then moving from mistrust to mutual trust: We should always begin from the perspective of recognition and not from the point of view of suspicion in order to strengthen what is held in common, whilst respecting the differences that exist amongst us. We celebrate the opportunity given to us to know one another and to explore creative ways of relating to one another more constructively in response to the call of our Lord Jesus Christ that we may be one ( John 17:21).

We have resolved that the method of collaborative ministry on matters of common concern and interest is a fruitful means of recognizing each other's gifts, strength and mission to the world. This process means that we will concentrate on both our points of strength and agreement rather than differences. We are convinced that we should apply this method to bring about collaboration and unity with other faith traditions going forward.

We realize that our commitment to one another will need to be expressed at different levels that are inter-related with each other. We recognize the place of local collaborative ecumenism as it is lively and lead to transformation. In other cases, seeking to collaborate will force us to face our theological differences. In such instances, we shall opt for unity and relationships than division.

## What we want to do together

Our churches face similar challenges in communicating the gospel of Jesus Christ in a rapidly secularizing and polarized society. We express our common commitment to proclaiming the good news of salvation, through Jesus Christ.

We feel the challenge to witness to God's liberating grace in ways which provoke and convey the hope and grace of the gospel.

We of us believe that the world is in need of the message of God's liberating grace. Therefore we commit to stand together to offer the message that God is salvation is for human beings and the rest of creation.

In all these ways, we wish to make more visible our common witness, in worship and service, on our journey together towards visible unity, walking together, praying together and working together.

## Kwazulu- Consultation Statement continued

### Next Steps

We commit to meeting annually to continue building and reviewing our journey together

We propose to share theological training opportunities and programmes, to develop a range of resources, in various forms, written and visual, to be used in all aspects of church life and theological education.

We are finding new ways to work for abundant life as we address the following social ills or challenges such as gender-based violence, ecological degradation, migration and poverty in the midst of plenty. Therefore, we commit to encouraging our churches to collaborate in this endeavor.

### Conclusion

We thank God for the opportunity to experience the fellowship of our communions in this new way. We are grateful for the generous hospitality offered to us by the University of KwaZulu-Natal which has enabled us to move forward together on our journey, inspired and energized to proclaim anew the good news of God's liberating grace.

**September 2019**  
**The University of KwaZulu-Natal, Pietermaritzburg, South Africa**

*Photos from the WMC - OAIC Consultation Programme*



## New Resource from World Methodist Evangelism: *Embrace*

World Methodist Evangelism has released a new resource, *Embrace: Showing and Sharing the Love of Jesus*. Growing out of Executive Director Kim Reisman's PhD work, *Embrace* has been taught in Africa, Europe, North America, the Pacific, and South America. Translation into Spanish and French is also underway.

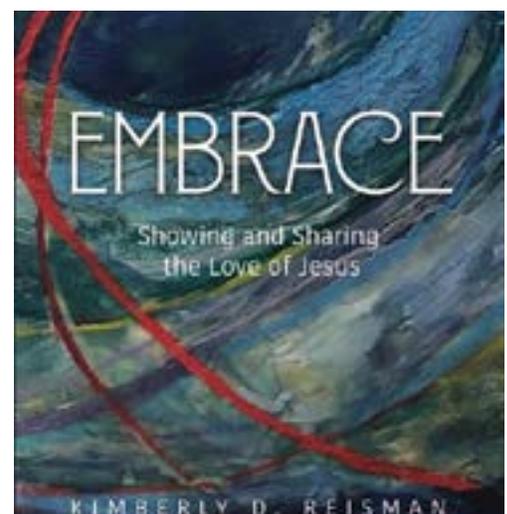
The world is dramatically different than it was a few decades ago. Technology and globalization have made us more connected, yet at the same time more divided. Societies all over the world are polarized by the forces of political ideology, secularism, economics, violence, and religion. Christ followers need ways to show and share the love of Jesus that transcends division, builds bridges, and allows room for the Holy Spirit to work for transformation. *Embrace* offers just that.

*Embrace* sets out six essential values that lie at the heart of authentic evangelism: **humility, clarity, prayer, integrity, worship, and urgency**. In focusing on these values, *Embrace* encourages faithful discipleship and graceful faith-sharing and enables people to become comfortable showing and sharing the love of Jesus in ways that are authentic and natural. *Embrace* provides a holistic under-

standing of the gospel and of faith-sharing, rooting all of our sharing deeply in spiritual disciplines and habits, and integrating it into other ministries of the church.

World Methodist Evangelism offers two ways to engage the *Embrace* training material. A study book is available as well as a workshop experience.

Currently, the study book is only offered in English and a Spanish version is being finalized. For more information, please contact [info@world-methodist.org](mailto:info@world-methodist.org).



## Ecumenical Relationships Committee has new Chair

The Rev. Tony Franklin-Ross has been appointed as chairperson of the Ecumenical Relationships Committee for the Council. He replaces the Rev. Dr. Tim Macquiban who held the role since 2016 until his recent resignation, during which time Franklin-Ross was the Committee's secretary. The appointment took place at the Council's recent Steering Committee meeting in Mexico City.

Franklin-Ross says he looks forward to serving in this new capacity and meeting the important role of interfaith sharing and dialogue for the Council. A presbyter/elder for the Methodist Church New Zealand, he is Synod Co-superintendent where 70 percent of the parishes are ecumenical partnerships. He is also Superintendent Presbyter of Trinity Methodist, which is a four-way ecumenical covenant of Anglican, Methodist, Presbyterian and Roman Catholic traditions. He also serves the New Zealand Connexion on Faith and Order, is the representative for the Council of Conference, and represents the New Zealand church's bi-cultural partnership.

The chair brings a range of practical and ecumenical backgrounds to his new role. A graduate of Bossey Ecumenical Institute, he has served as a tutor and has participated in a US State Department mini-Fulbright program on religious pluralism and church-state relations. Franklin-Ross has been a contributor and participant in World Methodist Council, World Council of Churches and Global Christian Forum meetings.

Franklin-Ross is a member of the Methodist-Roman Catholic bilateral dialogue in New Zealand and co-chair of the Anglican Methodist dialogue. He has recently chaired New Zealand's first trilateral dialogue, which was on the ministry of deacons in the Anglican, Methodist and Roman Catholic traditions. He participated in the Fourth International Conference on Receptive Ecumenism in Canberra, Australia and in the fourteenth Oxford Institute of Methodist Theologians, in a Discernment and Radical Engagement Conference organized by the World Council for Mission in Taiwan. He also attended the Global Network for Theology Conference in Bamberg, Germany and a conference in Durham, UK, for the 450th anniversary of the Northern Uprising in England relating to Anglican-Roman Catholic relations.



*The Rev. Tony Franklin-Ross*

## European Methodist Council Meeting



**European Methodist Council (EMC) meets in Valletri, Italy, September 14-17.** General Secretary Ivan Abrahams challenged the group in opening devotion. Participants examined how to welcome migrants and to work for humanitarian corridors to allow the most vulnerable of Africa and the Middle East to be able to enter with humanitarian visas. The EMC pledged to work toward climate justice, which adversely affects the most defenseless and to reduce their carbon footprint. Newly elected co-chairs of the EMC are Rev. Doug Swanney, British Methodist Church, and Bishop Harald Rueckert, United Methodist Church-Germany.

## Celebrating Hispanic Heritage Month

In our Hispanic-Latino countries, every day is a celebration of our respective cultural heritages. We live daily the richness of our countries and our history, our customs, the concept of unity in the family, and everything that is part of our daily lives. It is not until we migrate to the United States that we become aware of the diminishing or lack of these elements that form our being. In some places, we have access to the music, the products to prepare our typical dishes, and the opportunity to mingle with people who speak our language. However, there are some who feel somewhat isolated from all that has formed and developed their existence.

Those of us who are part of a faith community, where we are identified as people, feel the support and respect for who we are and why we exist. In the United Methodist Church, we have groups such as The National Plan for Hispanic-Latino Ministry, M.A.R.C.H.A. (Methodists Associated Representing the Cause of Hispanic Americans), Hispanic Women, Hispanic Clergywomen, and others who struggle to defend our cause and advocate for the Hispanic-Latino people. This reinforces our idiosyncrasies and motivates us to go forward in a process of continuous identification as children of God and in defense of who we are and what we can contribute to this nation without assimilating ourselves to the American culture.

Hispanic-Latino Heritage Month celebrates the contributions of Hispanic-Latino people to this nation. This month is not only so that we may celebrate who we are, but also for the whole nation to celebrate with us the fact that we can be part of this nation without abandoning or diminishing our Hispanic-Latino culture.

As defined by the United States Census Bureau, the term Hispanic refers to Spanish-speaking people in the United States of any race. On the 2000 census form, people of Spanish/Hispanic/Latino origin could identify themselves as Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, or other Spanish/Hispanic/Latino. More than 35 million people identified themselves as Hispanic or Latino on the 2000 census.



The legislative history of Hispanic Heritage Month goes as far back as 1968, when Congress approved the celebration of a week from September 5 to 16 as Public Law 90-490 on September 17, 1968. In Proclamation 4310 of September 4, 1974, the National Hispanic Heritage Week was approved for September 10-16. In Public Law 100-402, approved August 17, 1988, Congress 100, the change was made from one week to a month, starting September 15 through October 15. This was effective January 1 of the following year. In these proclamations and public laws, it is asked that people of the United States — especially the education community and organizations concerned with the protection of human rights — observe this month with appropriate activities and ceremonies.

There is not enough space to point out all that Hispanic-Latino people have favorably contributed to this nation. From high positions in government, to the field of science, armed forces, education, sports, culinary arts, the film and theater industry, music, dance and other arts, Hispanic-Latino people have made themselves heard. Spanish is the language most taught in the school system, and it is already included in all means of communication everywhere and in every established system.

We know that parades, festivals and parties, radio and televised programs, information via internet, and great local celebrations are held throughout the United States during this special month. Churches cannot fall behind in these celebrations. We must recognize that most of our congregations are made up of representations from many Hispanic-Latino countries. During this year, we have a series of events celebrating whom we represent. Nevertheless, it is extremely important that we become intentionally involved in the celebration of Hispanic Heritage Month during September 15 through October 15 this year and every year.

*What follows are some possible activities for observing the month. Click here to check it out -- [https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/resources/hispanic-latino-heritage-month?mkt\\_tok=eyJpIjoiT0dZMk0yVTJpV0UzWkRJeCIsInQiOiJDX-C9OOVwvTnpSSTZIV2NCOHpUMVY6MGtoZ2VzR-lorWkQIZINkeXpuSmFmVmZPdFpYNEkxR1NMaFV-DOEtCMklVeVBjWTh2M1RIQnBIWEdteE1QRkhMbd-NIMzdhVkfXNXNuTytUdVhWQ2lBY3grS2lBSVRTdFN-PdUtGVIFQaDFvTjRTIn0%3D](https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/resources/hispanic-latino-heritage-month?mkt_tok=eyJpIjoiT0dZMk0yVTJpV0UzWkRJeCIsInQiOiJDX-C9OOVwvTnpSSTZIV2NCOHpUMVY6MGtoZ2VzR-lorWkQIZINkeXpuSmFmVmZPdFpYNEkxR1NMaFV-DOEtCMklVeVBjWTh2M1RIQnBIWEdteE1QRkhMbd-NIMzdhVkfXNXNuTytUdVhWQ2lBY3grS2lBSVRTdFN-PdUtGVIFQaDFvTjRTIn0%3D)*

*Written by Rev. Liana Pérez Félix*

*Photo by sydney Rae on Unsplash.com*

## WesleyMen Introduce Seasonal “Hunger Liturgies”

WesleyMen, committed to ending hunger around the world, is unveiling a project of “seasonal liturgies.” For each liturgical season, three or four liturgies include a call to worship, a prayer of confession, a prayer of thanksgiving and a call to action. Some liturgies are for high profile days (first Sunday in Advent), some days that are observed less frequently (ie, Annunciation of the Lord). The liturgies are built around the two great cycles of the church year, Advent-Christmas-Epiphany and Lent-Easter-Pentecost, both of which focus on repentance-celebration-growth.

Each liturgy affords congregations the opportunity to delve more deeply into world hunger: roughly 21,000 people die each day from preventable hunger-related causes; about half are children. As the people of God called Methodists gain understanding, the prayer of WesleyMen is that the Holy Spirit will stir an ever-growing response! The liturgies are readily available for (free) downloading at <https://fastpraygive.org/resources/>. (Just copy that address into your browser.)

WesleyMen (The World Fellowship of Methodist and Uniting Church Men) was formed at the 2006 World Methodist Conference in Seoul, South Korea. Bringing together men in the Wesleyan tradition for Christian fellowship and witness through active works, the singular project of WesleyMen is addressing world hunger. Learn more at [FastPrayGive.org](http://FastPrayGive.org), and feel free to contact Rev. Steve Hickle, president, at [steve-hickle@wesleymen.org](mailto:steve-hickle@wesleymen.org).

*Rice, soy, vitamin and vegetable mix for school children, Rwamanja Refugee Settlement, Uganda.*



## Churches Week of Action on Food is October 13-20

Christians of all denominations and traditions are encouraged to rejoice and give thanks for God’s abundant provisions and to think of ways to share God’s gifts, so that all have enough. Jesus’ parable of the Great Banquet (Luke 14: 15-24) is used for inspiration and reflection. The image of a banquet refers to abundance, fellowship, joy and hope. All are invited.

But in today’s world, far too many people have no access to healthy nutrition. This is not because there is a lack of food, but because people fail to share so that all are able to partake in the feast of life.

The World Methodist Council family and ecumenical partners joined in producing liturgical materials and reflections for the 2019 *Churches’ Week of Action on Food*. This initiative of the World Council of Churches and the Ecumenical Advocacy Alliance offers support to churches in their ministries for food justice, equity, sustainability, and the alleviation of hunger and poverty around the globe.

Authored by people from around the world, it offers a taste of how differently we look at food security, healthy nutrition and a fair process of sharing earthly resources. There are examples of how churches might feed the hungry and expand love and hope. These reflections and liturgy for Holy Communion can be used in worships, prayer meetings and Bible study groups throughout the *Churches Week of Action on Food* and beyond. The material is available at: <https://www.oikoumene.org/en/press-centre/events/churches-week-of-action-on-food-2019>

## Director of the Methodist Ecumenical Centre in Rome



### Could this be you?

We are seeking an ordained person from a Methodist, Wesleyan United or Uniting Church to serve the World Methodist Council as Director of the Methodist Ecumenical Centre in Rome (MEOR).

The person appointed will develop and build on the work of MEOR on behalf of its partners, the World Methodist Council, European Methodist Council, the Methodist Church in Britain (MCB), the Methodist Churches in Italy (OPCEMI) and others, as a resource for the global Methodist family in order to help facilitate Methodist relationships with the wider ecumenical community, in particular with the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity of the Catholic Church (PCPCU).

The Director of MEOR will be someone who:

- is fluent in English and is able to speak or willing to learn Italian,
- holds a post-graduate qualification in theology,
- has good knowledge and sensitivity about the world-wide family of Methodist and Wesleyan churches,
- has a proven track record in ecumenical relations,
- is able to work as part of a team and is also self-motivated,
- has good verbal and written communication skills,
- is IT literate.

For further information and application pack please visit: [www.methodist.org.uk/jobs](http://www.methodist.org.uk/jobs)

The closing date for applications is **29th November 2019**.

Interviews will take place in London on January 27 and 28, 2020.  
Applications should be sent to [recruitment@methodistchurch.org.uk](mailto:recruitment@methodistchurch.org.uk)

Further information about MEOR can be found at: [www.methodistecumenicalofficerome.com](http://www.methodistecumenicalofficerome.com) and [www.methodist.org.uk/our-work/building-relationships/relationships-with-other-denominations/ecumenical-office-rome](http://www.methodist.org.uk/our-work/building-relationships/relationships-with-other-denominations/ecumenical-office-rome)

## MEOR Interim Director Announced

The new Interim Director of the Methodist Ecumenical Office in Rome (MEOR) is Rev. Dr. Daniel Pratt Morris-Chapman. He is a presbyter of the Methodist Church in Britain and has served in appointments both within the UK and overseas as a mission partner. He has been a lecturer in Cameroon (teaching African Philosophy, New Testament and Hermeneutics) where he was responsible for the administration of the candidates process for Presbyteral ministry. He has also served in bilingual churches in the north of Italy (working with Migrants and Italians) and as a member of the Liturgy and Worship Commission for the Federation of Protestant Churches there. His doctoral research was on the philosophical legacy of John Henry Newman who will be Canonised in October.



## Life saving programme offers safe path to Italy for refugees

**This was not just any arrival at Rome's busy main airport. These 15 families have the chance to start a new life, thanks to a unique partnership called Humanitarian Corridors.**

At first they looked nervous as they walked into the terminal building after the flight from Lebanon, unsure of how they would be received.

But a line of volunteers greeted them as they walked through the gate. They told the 77 refugees they were welcome - even saying the word "welcome" in Arabic. The volunteers regaled them with flowers and snacks and offered the children balloons. Soon the mood lightened.

"I was afraid before I arrived here," said a woman soon after landing with her husband and their four-year-old boy. "I didn't know people. Maybe they would be unfriendly . . . . When I came in (to the airport) and saw people smiling and the welcome, I was no longer afraid."

In Italy the programme is facilitated by an agreement between a consortium of religious organizations, Sant'Egidio Community; Caritas Italiana, the Federation of Evangelical Churches in Italy (FCEI) and the Waldensian Table, together with the foreign and interior ministries. It has been expanded to several other European countries.

**"When I saw people smiling and the welcome, I was no longer afraid."**

The programme was selected as the regional winner for Europe for UNHCR's Nansen Refugee Award — a prestigious annual prize that honours those who have gone to extraordinary lengths to support forcibly displaced and stateless people – for sponsoring refugees to resettle in Italy and start a new life.

In less than four years Humanitarian Corridors has brought more than 2,000 people to Italy and 350 more to France, in a legal way with a humanitarian visa in their hands. A recently signed agreement will allow 600 more refugees and other vulnerable people to travel from Jordan, Lebanon, Ethiopia and Niger.

On arrival, they apply for asylum and so far almost all have been granted international protection as refugees.

A growing number of extremely vulnerable refugees cannot either stay in their current host country or go home. They urgently need legal pathways allowing them to resettle in another country. This is why sponsorship programmes like Humanitarian Corridors are important because they provide a lifeline for those at greatest risk.

To help refugees to become self-supporting and integrate swiftly into Italian society, the organization offers a year of support including housing, legal aid and language classes. These are all paid for through its private funds.



*Maria Quinto, Humanitarian Corridors coordinator for the Community of Sant'Egidio, (centre) with Hebat, aged nine, from Syria, just after he landed in Rome from Lebanon.*

"Through this programme we aimed to promote solidarity among people, sharing responsibilities with institutions. We strongly hope that safe pathways become the norm and no longer the exception," said Oliviero Forti, head of Caritas Italiana's migration policy and international protection office.

Simone Scotta, 33, is an Italian who works for FCEI in Beirut, where he helps select which of the Syrian refugees in Lebanon can participate in the programme. The decision is largely based on humanitarian need. He also accompanies each flight to Italy.

Some of the refugees have lost homes, others family members, some had been imprisoned and tortured, while others have serious medical problems, he said. Yet, for all the anguish of the past, Scotta said he found joy in enabling people to start new lives.

"The moment that makes me happiest is when the plane takes off. You know the things the refugees experienced in Syria and Lebanon. I think it's fair that they are given a second chance," said Scotta,

Typical is one Syrian family from Damascus. The father was shot in the chest. He and his wife fled to Lebanon, where their son – now four years old - was born. They were selected among the most vulnerable by FCEI and now they have a chance of a fresh start.

"It's not easy to restart life at 43," said the father, who asked that his real name not be used to protect his identity. "But these people (the organizations) gave me their trust. I have to repay that trust and be a good person in this new place," he said, adding that he wanted to work in agriculture.

**"We strongly hope that safe pathways becomes the norm."**

## Life saving programme offers safe path to Italy for refugees continued

Humanitarian Corridors has its origin in the sinking of a boat carrying refugees and migrants off the coast of the Italian island of Lampedusa on 3 October 2013. More than 300 people died. The wreck that shocked the country, in part because it happened close to shore.

“It was the point of no return. The whole community experienced this moment of shame. We had the idea of finding another mode of organizing things for refugees,” said Maria Quinto of Sant’Egidio.

While the programme currently covers just a fraction of those arriving overall as asylum-seekers, the organizations behind it are actively working to provide a safer alternative to dangerous sea crossings for an increasing number of people. The organizations behind it hope to see it extended to refugees in detention in Libya.

“I believe that you shouldn’t abolish the notion that you

can come and seek asylum,” said Quinto. “What we can achieve is that we reduce that flow (of people coming by sea) by providing safe pathways.”

UNHCR’s Nansen Refugee Award is named in honour of Norwegian explorer and humanitarian Fridtjof Nansen, the first High Commissioner for Refugees, who was appointed by the League of Nations in 1921. It aims to showcase his values of perseverance and commitment in the face of adversity.

The overall winner of the award will be announced on 2 October and it will be presented by UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, at a ceremony in Geneva on 7 October.

*You can read about the other regional winners of the UNHCR Nansen Refugee Award here -- <https://www.unhcr.org/news/latest/2019/9/5d7a4f264/unhcr-names-nansen-refugee-award-regional-winners.html>*

## Recovery efforts underway in Bahamas following Hurricane Dorian

The Bahamas is facing severe damage after enduring wind and rain from Hurricane Dorian for nearly two days. At least 50 people were killed, although many more are still missing and the death toll is expected to climb. In the worst-hit parts of Grand Bahama Island, an estimated 75 to 100 percent of buildings were damaged, and in Marsh Harbor on Great Abaco Island, approximately 90 percent of buildings, homes, and infrastructure were damaged. Around 70,000 people needed food and shelter.

The hurricane moved north toward the United States, making landfall in North Carolina 6 September. When it hit, Dorian was a Category 1 storm. The Outer Banks, a group of barrier islands, were some of the hardest hit areas in the U.S. with water that rose five feet in less than an hour.

Since last week, Nazarenes have been actively responding in their communities. Nazarene Disaster Response leaders were on standby in South and North Carolina, although district superintendents in the area reported the damage to be less extensive than originally anticipated. A Nazarene assessment team reached Freeport and Grand Bahama as soon as possible, bringing aid packages with food and hygiene items. There are five Nazarene churches on Grand Bahama Island.

John Wildgoose, the district superintendent for the Bahamas, said that his church, Faith Church of the Nazarene in the West End, sustained serious damage and is “guttled.” Many homes were filled with four to five feet of water, so even buildings that managed to stand through the wind and rain now have serious flood damage.

Immediate needs for those in the Bahamas are food, shelter, water, and psychological care and support. Thousands of people have been evacuated to Nassau, which sustained less damage. The response from the Church of the Nazarene in the Bahamas will become clearer as transportation becomes easier; so far, accessing the islands is still extremely difficult.



*Faith Church of the Nazarene in the Bahamas was “guttled” by Hurricane Dorian.*

### How You Can Help

#### Pray

Pray for those who have lost loved ones, and pray for those facing loss of homes and livelihoods. Pray that those who need shelter will be able to find it. Pray for the swift delivery of the supplies and care they need, and pray for the months of recovery ahead. Pray for those who are most vulnerable during and after the storm, especially senior adults, individuals with disabilities, and people living in poverty. Pray for church leaders and churches responding to the needs around them. To send a prayer or note of encouragement, go to [ncm.org/pray](http://ncm.org/pray).

#### Give

Churches and individuals around the world can provide support through the 2019 Storm Response. Donations will be used for immediate needs, such as water and food, as well as long-term recovery and rebuilding efforts.

*Church of the Nazarene; to learn more on how you can help click here --<https://www.nazarene.org/article/recovery-efforts-underway-bahamas-following-hurricane-dorian>*

## Uniting for Climate

More than a thousand people from across the Uniting Church took to the streets joining more than 300,000 people all over Australia as part of the Global Climate Strike on Friday 20 September. Huge crowds of people, young and old, spilled onto the streets in more than 100 locations across the nation in an historic show of support for stronger action on the climate crisis. They were joined by millions of others at similar events all over the world.

UCA President Dr. Deidre Palmer thanked all those connected with the Uniting Church who participated or supported through prayer or action. “The Uniting Church was a visible presence at many of these events, reflecting our long-standing commitment to voice our concern for the well-being of all God’s creation,” said Dr. Palmer.

“We are thankful and inspired by the younger generation for their leadership, courage and mobilisation of this unprecedented call to action.”

Australian organisers of the School Strike for Climate, inspired by Swedish teenager Greta Thunberg, have described the rallies as a “historic show of community support” demonstrating “deep concern and desire for government action to address the climate crisis”. The number of attendees was more than double the previous rallies held six months ago in March 2019.

This time round, the young people leading the march invited the wider community to join them, an invitation that was widely taken up, with the Uniting Church throwing its support behind the young people alongside businesses, unions and many others at the march, including office workers, parents, grandparents and more.

The global action called for: policies which support 100% renewable energy by 2030, no new coal, oil and gas projects, a just transition and job creation for workers impacted by climate change and mitigation efforts.

People from across every UCA Synod, the Assembly and from Uniting Church agencies and schools marched together in locations all over the country with many meeting ahead of the rallies for a time of prayer and worship. At a service held at Pitt St Uniting Church in Sydney ahead of the rally in The Domain, Rev. Alimoni Taumoepeau delivered an inspiring message as part of a Communion service. “Why do I join the Climate Strike?” Rev. Taumoepeau said. “God gave me—and us all—the responsibility to take care of this world, not to destroy it.”

NSW/ACT General Secretary Rev. Jane Fry closed the service in prayer. “Take your tough-minded love and walk together for the sake of this glorious, groaning creation,” she said. “Take your fainting hearts and join your hands with your sisters and brothers who share this earth.” “Take your infuriated optimism and raise your voices together so all may hear the cry of the earth.”

As well as turning out to climate action events, Uniting Church members and congregations have supported the call to action in different ways, such as posting signs or ringing church bells. Thank you to all of those who promoted the march in every Synod.

The Climate Strike took place ahead of the UN Climate Summit in New York this week which aimed to bring world leaders together to accelerate actions to implement the Paris Agreement on Climate Change.



*Uniting Church in Australia taking part in the Global Climate Strike*

In an impassioned address, Thunberg criticised world leaders for not doing enough.

The Uniting Church has joined with Churches around the world in calling for stronger commitments from developed nations.

*If you're interested in staying connected to what the Uniting Church is doing on climate change, you might like to join the Working for Justice Circle. Click here for more information: <https://uniting.church/workingforjustice/>*

**Concert benefits Epworth** - The 350th anniversary of Susanna Wesley's birth will be celebrated with a concert by the Isle Choral Singers. Held in Wesley's Chapel at 7:00 in the evening on October 7, the £7 fee includes the concert admission and refreshments. All proceeds will be used to decorate an Epworth Room with authentically replicated wallpaper that decorated the Epworth home when Susanna raised her family there, including the famous sons John and Charles. For more information, click on [www.epwortholdrectory.org.uk](http://www.epwortholdrectory.org.uk)



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](mailto: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](http://FirstFridayLetter.worldmethodistcouncil.org).

The World Methodist Council's website may be found at [worldmethodistcouncil.org](http://worldmethodistcouncil.org).

The World Methodist Museum's website is at [methodistmuseum.org](http://methodistmuseum.org).

To subscribe to this newsletter, please email [communications@worldmethodistcouncil.org](mailto:communications@worldmethodistcouncil.org).

## About the First Friday Letter

The First Friday Newsletter is a monthly publication of the World Methodist Council.

Publisher: Bishop Ivan Abrahams, General Secretary

All stories and photos, unless otherwise stated, are protected by their respective copyrights. Please do not copy without express permission.

## Follow us on social media!!

### Twitter

@WMCouncil

### Facebook

@World Methodist Council  
@World Methodist Museum

### Instagram

@wmcouncil